ENTERTAINMENT /A2-1

Top 3 in Metro film fest: 'Enteng,' 'Exodus,' 'Mulawin'

▪ **SPORTS / A19**

Morales camp sees KO triumph over Pacquiao this time

▪ **NEWS / A2**

GMA says gov't to lay off workers, Cabinet changes in January

▪ **NEWS /A2**

Coming soon: Telenovela lives of SEAG gold medalists

4 telecom firms awarded licenses for 3G mobile tech

By Clarissa S. Batino

FOUR TELECOM COMPANIES, INCLUDING the country's three biggest mobile phone players, yesterday got the go-signal from the National Telecommunications Commission to roll out the third generation or 3G mobile technology beginning in 2006.

4 TELECOM/ A4

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
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To Baguio folk, Tuesday's 14.6 Celsius was 'warm'

By Gobleth Moulic
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

ANG INIT!
BRRRR!

BAGUIO CITY—THE MERcury is rising in the summer capital, discomfiting Baguio residents who had

TO BAGUIO/ A16

Peso hits 53.03 to dollar

On a 2½-yr high, thanks to overseas workers

By Michelle V. Remo and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE PESO ROSE YESterday to a two-and-a-half-year high of 53.03 against the dollar, boosted by strong remittances from Filipinos working overseas and market optimism brought about by the government's improving fiscal position.

It closed at 53.08, up from Tuesday's 53.18. Volume of trade stood at $259 million.

Over the past three months, the peso has gained over 6 percent, making it Asia's best performer this year.

"The peso attempted to breach the 53 level for the first time in over two years. The next target would be for the peso to reach the 52-to-a-dollar level," said Jonathan Ravelas, market strategist at Banco de Oro.

With the positive trend and optimism in the market, the peso is likely to hit the 52 level sometime within the first half of next year, Ravelas said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo crowed about the strengthening of the peso against the US dollar this year as she took some of the credit for the currency's emergence as the darling of the international currencies market.

PESO/ A4

REM ZAMORA

JOAN BONDOC

WEAPONS OF CHOICE to welcome 2006: (Right) Guns with nozzles sealed with masking tape and signed by the cops' respective police station chiefs. (Below) Homemade rocket-propelled grenades fashioned out of PVC plastic pipes by residents with a military mind-set along Sikatuna Road in Quezon City. It's the latest craze to say goodbye to 2005 and hello 2006.

A YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY gets President Arroyo a citation from the Jan. 2 issue of Time Magazine as one of the "People Who Mattered 2005." The US newsweekly with a global circulation calls Ms Arroyo a "survivor, riding out a bruising battle to impeach her … a financial scandal" involving her husband and son, and problems of corruption and poverty. *(Story on Page A16)* CHERYL RAVELO/REUTERS

Soldiers' weapons ordered muzzled, too

By Vincent Cabreza, Christine O. Avendaño and Margaux C. Ortiz

BAGUIO CITY—WHEN SOLDIERS are ordered to muzzle their guns, is another coup in the offing?

President Macapagal-Arroyo has included soldiers in the police practice of sealing the muzzles of government-issued firearms on New Year's Eve to discourage indiscriminate firing.

Ms Arroyo said yesterday she was concerned about stray bullets from revelers who fire their guns in the air. Over the past years, scores have died from stray bullets during New Year celebrations.

"I didn't issue an executive order [to enforce this ruling on the military]," the President said. She merely "encouraged" it.

The Philippine National Police

SOLDIERS/ A4

Olongapo prosecutors pursue fight for US Marines' custody

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

OLONGAPO CITY—FORESHADowing a possible custody battle, the lead prosecutor in the Subic Bay rape case yesterday questioned the right of the United States to hold on to four American Marines accused of raping a Filipino woman inside a van here.

Disputing a Malacañang official's view that a treaty with the United States superseded local laws, Olongapo City Prosecutor Prudencio Jalandoni said he would insist that the US Embassy transfer custody of the Americans to the Philippines.

Jalandoni indicated no less than the country's sovereign rights were at stake.

"That will show that we are serious in this case," Jalandoni told the INQUIRER, referring to his intention to demand the turnover of the defendants.

"How can we invoke and exer-

OLONGAPO/ A15

12-story Rizal shrine Jordanian's gift to Filipinos

By Melvin Gascon
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA—IT WAS A SUNny Christmas morning, an ideal time for 55-year-old philanthropist Mahmoud Asfour to be giving away gifts to children in the nearby farming village of Casat.

But the man many people here regard as a year-round Santa Claus was nowhere in sight.

His imposing mansion was quiet and the village folk who were scheduled to queue for his presents were busy drying their freshly harvested palay.

On that day, Asfour—a former Jordanian who acquired Filipino citizenship six months ago—was on top of a hill, checking on his greatest gift to Filipinos: A shrine to Dr. Jose Rizal said to be the biggest

12-STORY/ A15

SANTA for all seasons: That's how the folks in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya call Mahmoud Asfour, here inspecting his monument to heroes.

MELVIN GASCON/PDI CENTRAL LUZON DESK

Pyro show not just an orgy of life

By Volt Contreras

YOU WOULD THINK YOU'D know if you've seen a great or just middling fireworks show.

But organizers of the nine-nation "World Pyro Olympics" say there is an art and a science to watching and appreciating the orgy of lights, colors and explosions that has been igniting the night sky over Manila Bay from Dec. 26 to Dec. 30.

If only to do justice to the costly technology, long man-hours and "high precision" artistry that go into a pyrotechnics show, ordinary spectators should follow a set of "loose" criteria to guide their untrained eye, said Roberto Crisostomo, the tournament's

PYRO/ A4

Why the doctor is in, and working in barrios

By Gerry C. Lirio

NOT ALL DOCTORS ARE LEAVing the homeland for greener pastures.

Forty-two doctors have come forward to debunk the growing notion that most Filipino doctors want out of here.

They are here, and they are everywhere.

From Batanes to Marikina, from Legaspi City to Zamboanga del Sur, the 42 doctors gave one reason for staying put: They are badly needed here. No ifs, no buts. They are staying, they said, simply because it is their calling. All of them are practicing outside Metro Manila, including in never-heard-of towns.

They come from different family and cultural backgrounds. Some are single; most are married. Their ages range between 25 and 50.

Four are Muslim, namely, Jovette S. Guinal of Pitogo, Zamboanga del Sur; Dyan Sangcopan-Decampong of Bayang, Lanao del Sur; Saidailah "Cindy" Raki-in of Bacolod Kalawi, Lanao del Sur, and Ibrahim Macapodi of Amaipacpac, also in Lanao del Sur.

Their decision did not come without temptations.

Macapodi, 38, had to go through deep reflection when an opportunity came his way to work as a doctor in a Saudi Arabia hospital that paid at least P100,000 a month.

After a few days, he made up his mind: He said no to the

WHY THE DOCTOR/ A15

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern and Eastern Luzon will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers becoming widespread rains over the Bicol Region including Quezon and Aurora provinces. Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms.

COMPILED BY CHONA GALANG, PDI RESEARCH/12/29/05 SOURCE PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Second FRONT PAGE

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GMA: Gov't layoffs coming

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARroyo says streamlining the bureaucracy is one of the major items on her agenda next year and this will require retrenching a portion of the government's work force.

Ms Arroyo made the statement during a dinner she hosted for reporters here Tuesday night. She said the measure was necessary to cut the government's deficit and spur economic growth.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita confirmed he had taken charge of a Palace committee tasked with reviewing the performance of the Arroyo administration's appointees and said there will be some movements in the Cabinet as well that will likely be announced next month.

"There will be a few announcements later on but I am not at liberty to say it yet because the papers have not been worked out," Ermita said at a video news conference here. He said that most members of the Cabinet would remain at their posts.

Among the positions that would surely be filled up is the one to be vacated by Rigoberto Tiglao, the current chief of the Presidential Management Staff, who has been named ambassador to Greece.

Talk is rife that Philippine Information Agency chief Rene Velasco was being eyed to replace Tiglao and that Environment Secretary Michael Defensor would be named presidential chief of staff.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Department of Agrarian Reform, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Education are still being run by officers in charge.

During the dinner with reporters, Ms Arroyo said a top-to-bottom reorganization was crucial to operating an efficient government.

She said streamlining was essential as her government pushed for a shift to a parliamentary system.

Charter change, peace talks in Mindanao and environmental policy reforms were the other major items on her action plan for 2006.

Liza Fangsilat, DBM Cordillera director, said many government line agencies had been given until the first quarter of 2006 to submit new tables of organization that would determine how many workers the government would need to retrench next year.

She said Malacañang had not set a ceiling as it was allowing the agencies to determine the number of workers they require to remain efficient.

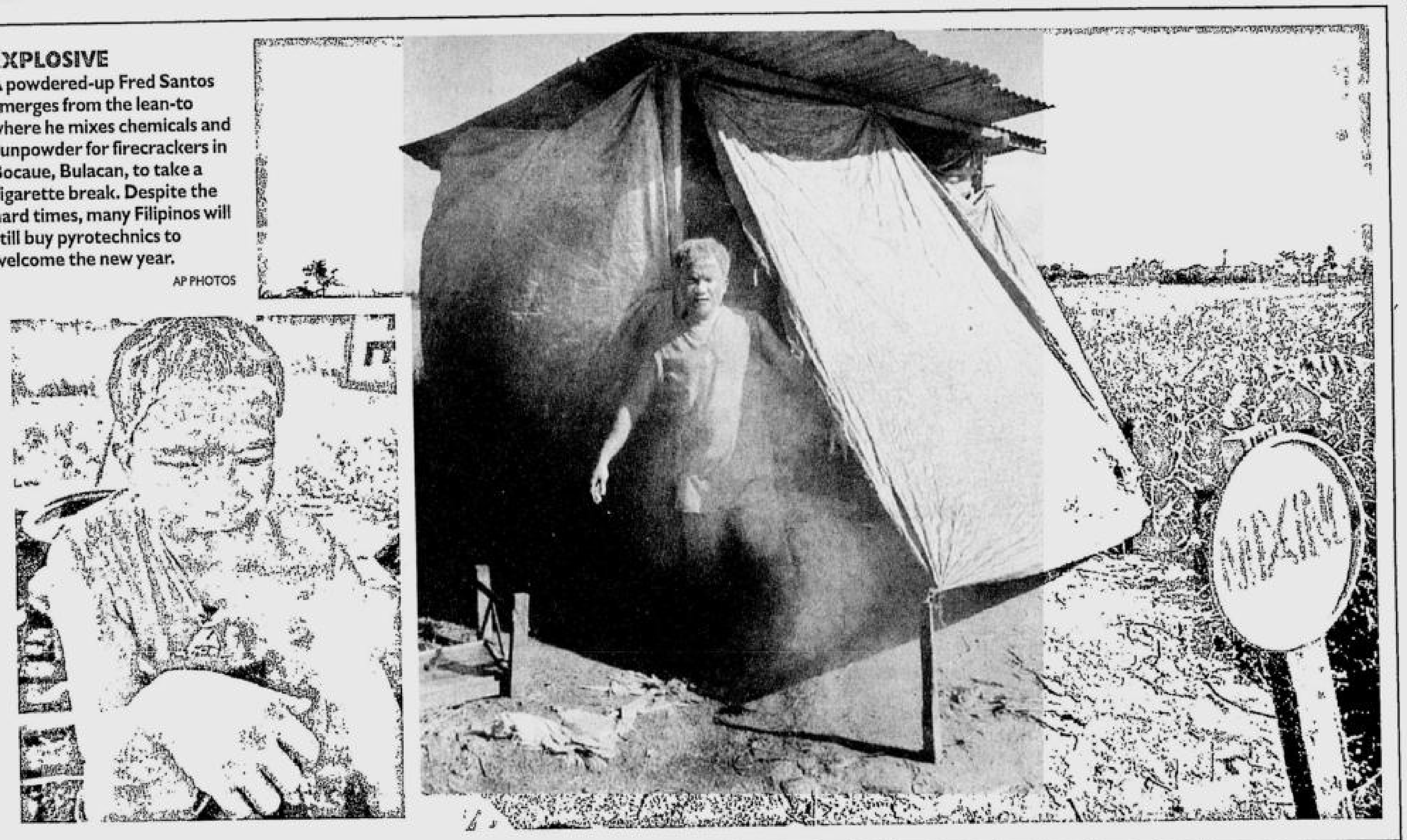
But Ces Peta, coordinator of the Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees (Courage), said the streamlining would leave 30 percent of the state work force jobless at the start of the year.

Courage has been monitoring the progress of negotiations between employees and government agencies.

"We have reason to believe that there are some agencies where employees have no organizations to fight for better pay. This is crucial because retrenched government workers will add to a high unemployment pool in the provinces, forcing many to leave the country," Peta said.

Meanwhile, in Manila, Labor Undersecretary for Employment Danilo Cruz said that DOLE would be letting go of about 100 employees who were planning to avail themselves of early retirement which carries a package of benefits under a rationalization program to be implemented next year.

"Government employees, including those in the DOLE who will be affected by the program, have the option to retire or be transferred to essential positions," Cruz explained, adding that many DOLE employees have voluntarily applied for early retirement which means that they may have plans other than to continue working with the government. *With reports from Jerome Aning and Christine O. Avendaño*



EXPLOSIVE
A powdered-up Fred Santos emerges from the lean-to where he mixes chemicals and gunpowder for firecrackers in Bocaue, Bulacan, to take a cigarette break. Despite the hard times, many Filipinos will still buy pyrotechnics to welcome the new year.

AP PHOTOS

Gov't pay hike sure in 2006 —Drilon

By TJ Burgonio

SENATE PRESIDENT FRANKLIN Drilon yesterday assured the national government's 1.2 million employees they would get their salary increases in full next year even if passage of the P1.053-trillion national budget were to be delayed up to March.

"We will make sure in the Senate that the salary increase for over 1 million of our national government workers would retroact to Jan. 1, 2006," Drilon told reporters at a briefing during which he also presented his year-end report.

He was optimistic the budget, the biggest ever submitted to Congress for approval, would pass into law by the end of the first quarter of next year.

Drilon said he expected the House of Representatives to transmit the proposed 2006 budget to the Senate by the middle of February and that it would take the senators four to five weeks to approve it.

When Congress adjourned two weeks ago for the holidays, the budget measure remained stuck in the House committee on appropriations, which had failed to hold hearings for lack of a quorum.

Budget hearings

To avoid further delay, the Senate convened itself into a committee of the whole and conducted budget hearings by department starting in mid-November.

Drilon said that while they were aware of the need to pass the budget as soon as possible, the senators would still scrutinize new items in the budget that are perceived to be sources of pork barrel funds. These are the P5-billion Kilos Asenso Fund and the P3-billion Kalayaan Barangay Program Fund.

Doubts

Meanwhile, Drilon warned that the country would not be able to sustain its economic gains this year unless President Macapagal-Arroyo cleared all doubts about her presidency's legitimacy and dealt squarely with the string of controversies hounding her.

"I have my doubts about the medium-term sustainability of high quality economic growth without strong and wise political leadership," he said, reading from his report titled "Above All, National Interest."

Drilon said the lingering political crisis was distracting the Arroyo administration and preventing it from instituting social and political reforms crucial to economic growth.

"Our political crisis drags on with an administration facing widespread loss of public support," he said, echoing the view of Sen. Rodolfo Biazon that Ms Arroyo's woes were far from over until the issue of her legitimacy was resolved.

Graft raps filed vs BIR chief

GRAFT AND ESTAFA CHARGES have been filed against Bureau of Internal Revenue Commissioner Jose Buñag and three other BIR officials for their alleged refusal to pay an informer the P1.98-million reward due him.

In his complaint, Felicito Dolar Jr. accused Buñag, BIR acting Assistant Commissioner Milagros Regalado and Assistant Commissioner James Roldan, both of the BIR Legal Service, and legal analyst Germu Sabayle with violating Republic Act No. 2338 which grants rewards to informers on tax violations.

The complaint was filed two weeks ago in the Department of Justice. Dolar contested Regalado's earlier decision denying him the reward because finance regulations and the Tax Code prohibit the granting of rewards to informers related up to the sixth degree of consanguinity to BIR employees or other public officials.

He said it was not in Regalado's power to decide that Dolar was related to a BIR employee and hence not entitled to the reward.

In a letter to Dolar, Regalado said he was not entitled to receive the money because his uncle, Edgar Allan del Rosario, was a BIR revenue officer.

"Regalado ... issued an opinion denying the claim on the ground of relationship, thru false pretenses and fraudulent acts, by falsely pretending to possess qualification to resolve such issue when in truth and in fact, the authority to pass upon the degree of relationship between the Internal Revenue Officer and the Informer is vested upon the Commissioner of Internal Revenue and the Solicitor General, rendering the opinion null and void," Dolar said in the complaint. *Leila B. Salaverria*

Coming: SEAG athletes' lives as 'soap'

By Vincent Cabreza,
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—THE LIVES AND exploits of the victorious athletes of the recent 23rd Southeast Asian Games are about to become the stuff of television soap opera.

At a dinner with reporters at The Mansion here on Tuesday, President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered Secretary Cerge Remonde, director of the Government Media Group, to produce a television series featuring the biographies of each of the 280 Filipino athletes who won gold medals in the SEA Games held in Manila in November.

The President and First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo also supported a proposal by Baguio City Mayor Braulio Yaranon to showcase all of the gold medalists at the 11th Baguio Flower Festival, or Panagbenga, in February.

Ms Arroyo said "it was a good idea" for the athletes to march down Session Road with the colorfully clad street dancers of the festival as it would widen appreciation of their exploits.

"This festival really draws people," she said at the dinner that she hosted for reporters here.

"There are very, very good stories about every athlete [who participated in the SEA Games]," said Mike Arroyo, who earlier treated the gold medalists to a trip to Hong Kong Disneyland.

He said one of the cyclists, Ronald Lising, was a tricycle driver in Angeles City "who learned the game from observing the sport every time he [ferried] enthusiasts."

The President said the story of diver Sheila Mae Perez, a triple gold medalist, would make good material for the show. She said Sheila had supposedly learned to dive by joining children diving into the sea for coins thrown by visitors in their Mindanao village.

The gold medalists who hail from Baguio, as well as athletes who have roots in the Cordillera, will be honored here on Dec. 30 as part of the annual Silahis ng Pasko project.

Mark Jimenez to sue US airline over stopover snafu

By Norman Bordadora

HE MAY CONSIDER IT PRUDENT not to wade into politics at this time, but recently released felon Mark Jimenez can never be away from the limelight for very long.

The former Manila congressman and controversial businessman has taken up the cause of Filipinos claiming to have been mistreated by the United States-based Northwest Airlines.

Jimenez announced at the Christmas weekend that he was planning to lead Northwest victims in the filing of a class suit against the US carrier for allegedly treating the Filipino passengers of its Dec. 18 flight from Detroit to Manila like "second-class citizens."

"While I have already made known to officials of this airline the displeasure of their Filipino passengers during a stopover in Narita [airport in] Japan, I feel that we have to pursue the matter more forcefully to show to the world that we Filipinos fight for our rights," Jimenez said.

He said that when the flight was diverted from its scheduled stopover in Nagoya to Narita airport in Tokyo because of bad weather, Northwest personnel arranged hotel accommodations for the Japanese passengers but not for the Filipino passengers who had to wait it out at Gate 25 of the air terminal.

"Northwest personnel gave the Filipinos the cold shoulder treatment while denying them even the most basic information like how long they were supposed to wait it out at the airport and when the flight to Manila would resume," Jimenez said.

"It was only after I blew my top that we got some answers and some pillows and blankets. It was freezing cold at the terminal, but the dimwit personnel of this airline only gave them to us when I started making a scene. Imagine how the children and babies must have suffered," he said.

Northwest officials explained that the airline was not required to provide for the needs of stranded passengers if the cause of a flight's delay was beyond their control such as bad weather.

"If that is so, why then were the Japanese passengers given special treatment and provided transportation to places where they could stay?" Jimenez said.

'Jueteng' whistle-blower dreads arrival of new year

IT'S A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE New Year but Sandra Cam isn't thrilled. Truth is she is dreading the coming year.

Beginning Jan. 1, the witness who linked the family of President Macapagal-Arroyo to "jueteng" in testimony at the Senate in June will lose her security detail.

The Senate's Office of the Sergeant-at-Arms (OSAA) is recalling all three security men assigned to her effective Dec. 31, apparently because the guards were costing the government too much, according to Cam.

"Of course I fear for my life. I'm a woman and a single parent at that," Cam, 45, a mother of three boys, said in a phone interview, sounding glum. "I don't know how to get security for myself."

The INQUIRER tried to reach Gen. Jose Balajadia Jr. (ret.), OSAA chief, but he was unavailable for comment.

Apart from the security detail, the Senate had provided Cam with a car, but she paid for the gas. Beyond that, she buys her own food and stays in "safe houses" provided by friends, Cam said.

The Senate assigned the security men and the car to Cam in July, a month after she first testified that she had delivered jueteng proceeds to Representatives Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo and Ignacio "Iggy" Arroyo, the President's son and brother-in-law, respectively, at the House of Representatives in December 2004.

The Arroyos denied her allegations and sued her for libel.

This wasn't the first time the Senate recalled Cam's security detail. Without "formal notice," the OSAA recalled her three security men on Dec. 14. But when she complained about it in the media, the OSAA sent two security men back on Dec. 16 but gave word they would be officially out by Dec. 31. *TJ Burgonio*

Pagasa: 2005 less destructive

By Norman Bordadora

A YEAR AFTER FOUR STORMS ravaged central and southern Luzon one after the other between late November and early December in 2004, the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said yesterday 2005 was relatively less destructive as far as tropical cyclones were concerned.

In fact, the two most destructive typhoons to enter the Philippine area of responsibility (PAR) in the middle of the typhoon season in July spared the archipelago before wreaking havoc and causing tragedy in Taiwan, said Pagasa weather branch chief Nathaniel Cruz.

Cruz told the INQUIRER the tropical cyclones that hit the country this year were less destructive in terms of magnitude compared to those that hit in 2004 and caused death and devastation.

"The tropical cyclones this year were less destructive in terms of intensity. Remember when four typhoons hit the country in the last part of November until the middle of December (2004)?" Cruz said.

He was referring to typhoons "Unding," "Violeta," "Winnie" and "Yoyong" which ravaged eastern Luzon and caused landslides and flash floods in Aurora and Quezon. They also resulted in a sad Christmas for those who lost loved ones, property and livelihood in these areas.

He said cyclones that hit in the last quarter of the year are usually more destructive since they usually cross highly populated regions like central Luzon, southern Tagalog and Bicol.

"There was a fifth tropical cyclone, 'Zosimo,' but it was not much of a factor," Cruz said.

The flash floods and landslides caused by the rains brought to the fore issues of illegal logging and forest denudation.

The onslaught of the cyclones, on the other hand, once again brought out the issue of Pagasa's outdated equipment and dire need of funds.

This year, only tropical depression "Quedan" made landfall in December.

"It was just a tropical depression but it caused heavy rains because of the already existing weather systems—the cold front in Luzon and the inter-tropical convergence zone in the Visayas and Mindanao," Cruz said.

Quedan caused heavy flooding on Mindoro island.

In 2005, six of the cyclones that entered the PAR made landfall. A total of 17 cyclones entered the PAR this year.

Based on a 50-year average, Cruz said, nine cyclones out of 20 that enter the PAR make landfall.

Cruz said the Philippines was fortunate in that two strong typhoons, one was a super-typhoon, that entered the PAR spared the archipelago in July.

These two were "Feria," a super-typhoon with winds of 195 kph near the center and gustiness of 230 kph, and "Gorio," a typhoon with winds of 150 kph and gustiness of 185 kph.

"Tropical cyclones (at that time of year) usually take a northwestern track. Feria and Gorio's tracks were more northward. We were fortunate that they spared the country," Cruz told the INQUIRER.

Feria and Gorio went on to cause heavy damage in Taiwan.

With just three more days to go in the year, Cruz said there'd probably be no more tropical cyclones for 2005.

"Even outside the PAR, we've yet to see a brewing cyclone that could threaten the country," Cruz said.

Regional official contests dismissal

By Christine O. Avendaño

INSISTING HE WAS A COLLEGE graduate, a regional director of the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP) said yesterday he would fight to clear his name after Malacañang dismissed him last week for allegedly faking his school records.

Dr. Ulysses Brito said he planned to appeal the decision dismissing him as officer in charge of the NCIP regional office in Bicol. The Office of the President had dismissed Brito upon the recommendation of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC).

"I'm not interested in returning to a government post," Brito told the INQUIRER in an interview. "I just want to clear my name."

He said he would file a motion for reconsideration because the PAGC had not acted on his earlier motion for it to issue a subpoena requiring the Naga College Foundation and the Commission on Higher Education (CHEd) to present school records showing he had completed an AB English course.

Brito said he learned of his dismissal only from the news and this caused him and his family pain and embarrassment.

In announcing Brito's dismissal on Dec. 23, PAGC chair Constancia de Guzman said Malacañang had affirmed her decision in May finding Brito guilty of dishonesty and falsification of official documents and recommending his dismissal.

According to De Guzman, Brito's transcript had been forged as a check of his school records showed he had completed only 33 units at the Naga College Foundation. A check with CHEd in Region V also showed that the special order indicated in Brito's transcript did not bear the authorized code.

But Brito denied all this, as he insisted that he was a victim of a demolition job and "continued harassment" by his detractors.

Brito showed the INQUIRER a photocopy of his transcript of records from the Naga college that he said was issued to him in 1988 and signed by school registrar Josefina Villanueva. The transcript indicated that he attended the college from 1983 to 1988 and completed his AB English course.

Brito claimed that this "demolition job" against him began as early as 2000 when he was relieved as NCIP Region V director and replaced by Lee Arroyo, a niece of Sen. Joker Arroyo. He said he filed a case against Arroyo who, he claimed, was not a career executive service officer (CESO) like him.

He said the case eventually reached the Court of Appeals which ordered his reinstatement as NCIP Region V director in August last year but he did not assume the position because Arroyo had filed an appeal.

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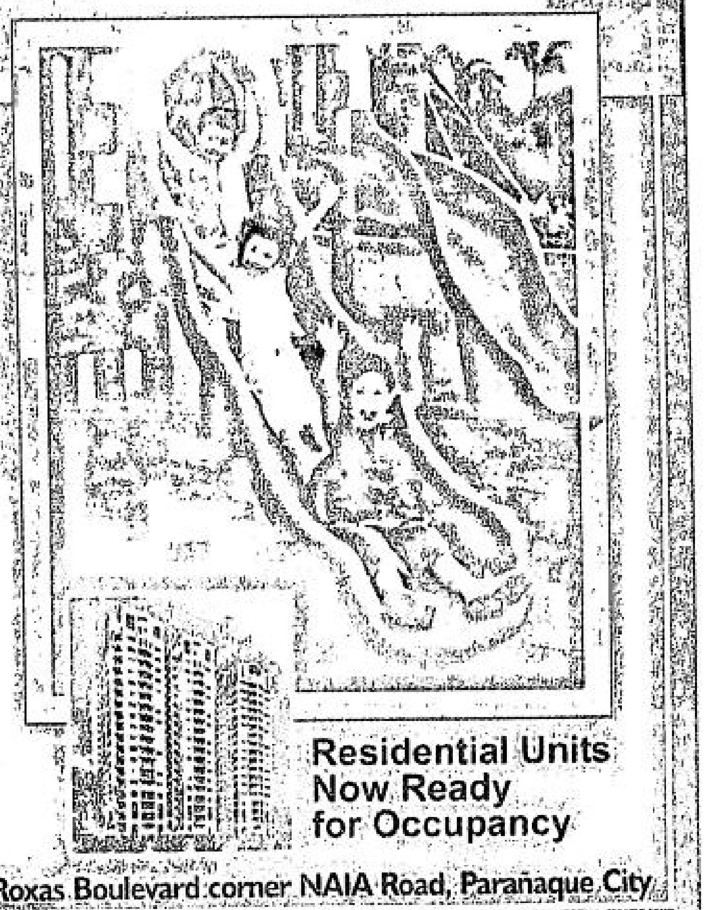

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Altis 1.8 E A/T	878,000	100,000	66,560	45,836	36,536	26,072	21,038	18,160
Altis 1.6 E A/T	800,000	100,000	59,539	41,000	32,688	23,326	18,822	16,244
Altis 1.6 E M/T	765,000	100,000	56,388	38,831	30,962	22,094	17,828	15,385
Altis 1.6 J M/T	708 000	100,000	51 757	35 297	28 150	20 088	16 209	13 985

MODEL	SRP	DOWNPAYMENT	12	18	24	36	48	60
Innova 2.5 G A/T	1,045,000	100,000	82,039	56,495	45,014	32,122	25,919	22,384
Innova 2.5 G M/T	980,000	100,000	76,188	52,466	41,807	29,834	24,073	20,787
Innova 2.0 G A/T	985,000	100,000	76,638	52,776	42,054	30,010	24,215	20,910
Innova 2.0 G M/T	930,000	100,000	71,687	49,366	39,341	28,074	22,653	19,559
Innova 2.5 E M/T	865,000	100,000	67,636	46,576	37,121	26,489	21,374	18,454
Innova 2.5 J M/T	798,000	100,000	59,804	41,183	32,829	23,427	18,903	16,317
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Peso hits 2 1/2-year high of 53.03 to US dollar

From page A1

"It's a good time to look forward because the peso performance against the dollar has simply been stupendous," said the President in brief remarks beamed live from The Mansion in Baguio. "It is now considered the best performing currency in the world."

Besides the strong remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), good portfolio investment inflows and export earnings—the reasons cited by the central bank for the peso's strength—the President pointed to the positive impact of her economic reforms.

"The peso's strong performance and the recognition by Spain (that the Philippines is its priority area for trade in Asia) are both good indicators of the government's commitment to improve the economy and we hope to be able to continue with more effective governance," she said.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, in a briefing following the President's remarks, said most people could not believe the peso would rally to 53 this time of the year when only six months ago, most people were predicting the peso would fall to 60 to the dollar.

The peso's rise yesterday came after the Department of Finance released projections on the government's fiscal position.

The DOF said the national government's budget deficit for the whole of 2005 would likely be P160 billion to P165 billion, far lower than the P180-billion ceiling set by fiscal authorities early in the year.

Belt-tightening

The likely better-than-target deficit would be due to belt-tightening and higher revenues in the form of dividends remitted by state-owned firms to the national government, the DOF earlier said.

"Positive sentiment about the country's fiscal performance continued to support the currency," said Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr.

All-time high

Tentangco said strong remittances from OFWs and higher portfolio investments inflows boosted the peso.

Inflows from OFWs and portfolio investments were enough to cover the dollar requirements of the power and manufacturing sectors, he said.

The BSP earlier said OFW remittances were expected to hit an all-time high of $12.3 billion this year.

Traders said this would allow the peso to stay within the 53-to-a-dollar level by the end of the year.

Philip Wee, DBS Bank's currency strategist, said he expected the peso to gain 2 percent to 52 per dollar by the end of 2006.

"We are generally optimistic about the peso, which could witness a re-rating on improving fiscal prospects," he said.

Credit rating upgrade

Ayes at Equitable PCIBank expects the currency to strengthen to 52 some time in March but only after a downturn in the first two months of the year.

He expects the government to issue dollar-denominated international bonds in February to coincide with any credit rating upgrade so that they can be issued at comparatively low yields. The dollar bonds should help lift the peso, he said.

"We could see some (dollar) supply come in in February," he said.

Ravelas said the increase in the VAT (value-added tax) rate from 10 to 12 percent in February next year could lift the peso to the 52-to-a-dollar level in the first half of 2006.

VAT brings down deficit

The increase in the VAT rate would help government further improve its fiscal standing, and easily wipe out its budget deficit. The DOF earlier said that with the new VAT law in place, the deficit could be brought down to zero by 2008, or two years earlier than the 2010 target.

The VAT Reform Law, considered the centerpiece of the Arroyo administration's fiscal reform agenda, expanded the coverage of the VAT to include oil and electricity. *With a report from Reuters*

Soldiers' weapons ordered muzzled, too

From page A1

(PNP) policy has been so effective that the military is now adopting it upon Ms Arroyo's "encouragement," said Maj. Gen. Romeo Tolentino, commander of the military's Northern Luzon Command.

"I have just given the directive to my chief of staff that all the gun muzzles of soldiers be sealed with tape," Tolentino said.

Power grab

The directive came as Malacañang acknowledged rumors about a power grab.

Malacañang wants people to ignore what Palace officials said were "empty talk and dud threats of another move to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo from power.

"There is no point in paying too much attention to rumors and intrigues when the New Year beckons with more economic gains and opportunities for all Filipinos," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said.

Earlier this month, coup rumors swept Metro Manila. Days later, former Defense Secretary Fortunato Abat declared himself president of a "transition government," and called on the police and military to withdraw support from Ms Arroyo. No one heeded his call. He was arrested two days later.

Opposition senators said Ms Arroyo may have survived her worst political crisis, but she has yet to hurdle the task of putting to rest questions about her legitimacy. The President is accused of stealing the polls in 2004, but she has denied any wrongdoing.

Bunye said the "incessant attacks" against Ms Arroyo had only strengthened her "moral armor."

The public has grown weary and tired of all those oust-the-President talk, according to Bunye.

He insisted that the Arroyo administration was "anchored on firm and secure ground that will serve as the springboard for the President's 2006 plan of action."

Special meeting

Ms Arroyo convened a special meeting on firecrackers and loose firearms after her surfing trip to La Union to ensure that Baguio remained safe while the First Family spent the Christmas holidays here, according to Environment Secretary Michael Defensor.

"The President, (Director General Arturo) Lomibao and myself will be here for the New Year and that is why the President wants to make sure that Baguio City will be a safe place and there will be no illegal firing of firearms ... and the use of illegal firecrackers will not happen," Defensor said.

The following exchange between Ms Arroyo and First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo suggested that Malacañang's decision to enforce control measures on the military was also meant to play down the threat of communist attacks during the holidays.

"The police's guns are muzzled. The soldiers' guns are muzzled. Will the New People's Army's guns also be muzzled?," Mr. Arroyo asked the President.

The NPA celebrated its 37th founding anniversary on Dec. 26, but Lomibao, PNP chief, said no serious encounters between government soldiers and rebels had disrupted the holidays in the provinces.

Lomibao said the muzzling policy did not prevent law enforcers or soldiers from firing their guns during legitimate operations.

NBI, too

The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) has also taken steps to prevent its personnel from indiscriminately firing their service firearms.

NBI officer in charge Nestor Mantaring yesterday said he would issue a memorandum ordering all agents, special investigators and NBI personnel to refrain from firing their guns during the New Year revelry.

"There was never an instance before that an NBI agent was caught firing his gun during the New Year celebrations," Mantaring said in a phone interview.

Mantaring, however, said that agents who defied the order would be subjected to administrative charges.

Over at the Manila Police District (MPD), police have started taping the muzzles of their service firearms in preparation for the New Year.

Commanders' initials

MPD director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong said the police commanders would also write their initials on the masking tape to prevent any indiscriminate firing of guns.

Bulaong said the masking tape would be removed during another inspection after the New Year.

"Police officers who tampered with the seal and used their guns without any legitimate reason would immediately be dismissed," he said.

We're just a cog in the machine, PNP tells Gunless Society leader

By Luige A. del Puerto

WHILE THE PHILIPPINE National Police may be "open" to a peace advocate's vision of a gunless society, where only law enforcers are allowed to carry guns in public, the PNP is just a cog in a machine whose job is to enforce laws and not to make them, a senior official said yesterday.

In short, Gunless Society president Nandy Pacheco should not complain about the police and instead focus on those who make policy, such as lawmakers.

"He and others who support him can push for the passage of a law; but we in the police merely enforce existing rules," said the PNP spokesperson, Chief Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil.

Bataoil said he was "open to the idea of a gunless society" but he added that this view "may not be necessarily shared by all my colleagues."

The police, in fact, lean toward allowing "responsible individuals" to carry guns, according to another ranking officer.

The official refused to be quoted because doing so could compromise his position in the Philippine National Police.

"In an ideal world, where there are adequate numbers of policemen, where cops have the equipment they need, and where there is no insurgency, a gunless society is really good," he said.

"Unfortunately, we cannot even perfectly reach a gun ratio of one-to-one for our policemen," he said.

Allowing "responsible" citizens to own guns makes up for what the police, who are "not always there," lack, he said.

"If you impose a gunless system in our society, only the law-abiding citizens will follow that. The criminals will not, and they will strike where they can," he said.

Deterrent

"Gun (ownership) allows responsible owners to defend themselves. They are a form of deterrent," he said.

About 3,000 to 4,000 of the country's 900,000 registered firearm owners had permits to carry (PTC), police records showed.

Only the chief PNP grants the PTC, and the requirement is "actual threat," and given only after a thorough threat assessment.

An INQUIRER source said it was easier for media people and members of the House of Representatives to get PTCs over regular citizens because threats to the first group are deemed "inherent in the job."

But while there are pro-gun policemen, there are also others who share Pacheco's dream of a less violent Philippines.

Unlikely ally

Pacheco found an unlikely ally in the police in the middle of this year, when a senior police official called on the TV and movie industry to stop "glorifying violence"—a change of attitude that Pacheco has been advocating since the mid-1980s.

Retired Deputy Chief for Administration Ricardo de Leon once said that an "alternative to the culture of violence is a culture of peace."

"One way of addressing this culture of violence is to have regulation... I think it's also (the) responsibility of our friends—in TV stations and in the movies—not (to) glamorize violence," De Leon said.

A good example of that would be to refrain from turning the lives of criminals into movies that young people could emulate, the former official said.

De Leon, when he was the second highest official in the Philippine National Police, had vigorously fought for stricter control of guns. (The PNP is the agency that regulates the sale and use of firearms. Gun registration is also a source of millions of pesos for the PNP.)

Ban on high-powered firearms

Upon De Leon's prodding, police Director General Arturo Lomibao had banned the display of high-powered firearms and other military weapons in gun stores and shows nationwide.

In a memorandum, Lomibao said imported, high-powered firearms were intended for "qualified end-users like the military, police and other law enforcement [agents]."

That meant shooting events must exclude high-powered firearms as a category.

The reason was simple, according to De Leon. Civilians "should only have shotguns," he said.

He said the police surely did not want other areas in the country to be like Abra, where private armed groups once roamed and the entire provincial police force was sacked because it failed to go after the armed groups.

4 telecom firms awarded licenses for 3G mobile tech

From page A1

The new technology would enable cellular phone users to make video calls, access high-speed Internet, advanced gaming and even mobile television in addition to texting and making regular calls.

The Philippines is known as the world's texting capital with more than 30 million mobile phone subscribers sending more than 400 million messages a day.

The four carriers that received the nod of the NTC were Smart Communications Inc., Globe Telecom Inc., Digitel Mobile Phils. Inc. (operator of Sun Cellular) and new player Connectivity Unlimited Resources Inc. (CURE) of former Trade Secretary Roberto Ongpin.

1 more slot available

"We are bullish about this new development in our company as we get ready to provide the 3G applications that would greatly benefit our valued customers," said Globe senior vice president Rodolfo Salalima.

The NTC has one more slot for a 3G operator, which it had not awarded, pending the evaluation of the applications of at least five other applicants.

The frequency bands the four companies will use will be awarded shortly, according to the NTC.

Smart, being the largest, was given first crack at choosing its frequency bands. Then Globe can have a pick of the remaining frequency bands followed by Sun Cellular and, lastly, by Cure.

Ahead of the rest

Smart spokesperson Ramon Isberto said the company will roll out its 3G services ahead of the rest. He said Smart had already ordered the network facilities. Smart, together with Talk 'N Text, has more than 20 million customers.

The other applicants are Bayan Telecommunications Inc. of the Lopez group; trunk radio operator Next Mobile Inc.; AZ Communications Inc. linked to Antonio Cojuangco; Multi-Media Telephony Inc., formerly controlled by Jose de Venecia III and now linked to Enrique Razon, and Pacific Wireless Inc. with links to a Malaysian group.

"Globe had successfully completed its first 3G video calls in July and had complied with all the NTC's 3G requirements by October," said Salalima in a statement.

Salalima said the key words were full mobility, richer experience and greater convenience to customers once 3G mobile services are available.

Needed frequency

Globe said it needs 20 megahertz of bandwidth for the planned upgrade of its cellular network to 3G. It particularly requested for the 1920-1940 MHz, 2110-2130 MHz paired radio frequency bands, with the 1960-1980 MHz, 2150-2170 MHz bands as second priority.

"The needed frequency will be critical to our success in maintaining and quickly delivering state-of-the-art mobile services while pushing the envelope on more advanced cellular technology in the Philippines," added Salalima.

Smart president Napoleon Nazareno said Smart will spend about $60 million in the first two years of operating 3G.

1st, 2nd, 3rd

3G follows the first and second generations in wireless communications.

The first generation was born in the late 1970s and lasted through the 1980s. These networks featured "cellular mobile radio telephone" that used analog voice signaling. The 1990s ushered in the second generation, which featured digital voice encoding.

Pyro show not just an orgy of life

From page A1

point man.

Crisostomo said spectators should look out for the "variety of shells used".

Mix of explosives

Being able to identify the type of shell—or the mix of explosives used in each contraption—would be a good start in understanding a pyrotechnician's palette.

Among the most basic are "The Peony," the kind of concoction that sends off brilliant dots from a center, like an exploding star.

Don't confuse peonies with "The Ring" which goes off from an invisible center and only defines the edge of an empty circle.

"Kamuros" create wiggly noodles that sparkle brightest when they are on on their way down, as opposed to "Mines" wherein the spray of light goes upwards, like anti-aircraft fire. The brilliant streak is called the "tail" in pyro-lingo.

"Palms," as the name suggests, leave outlines of palm fronds sagging from a trunk, and there is of course the easily distinguishable "Golden Swirls."

And then there is the thrilling "8-Break Blooms" which is a single shell that can explode eight times in the air.

Innovation

A cute innovation from the Ring is the "Smiling Face," a circle showing two dots in the middle for eyes and the suggestion of a mouth.

A good, overall production should have synchronization, color combination, highs and lows, said Crisostomo.

Having "big bang" episodes so close together can be actually boring, he said.

"It's like composing a song. There should be moments of intensity but also soft moments that allow spectators to breathe before leading them to another high point," he said.

A show can go "thin" if all the action seems to be confined to a vertical plane or a narrow column of the sky. The pyrotechnician will try to shoot from different angles.

Multi-level firing

Crisostomo said modern pyrotechnics already allow for "multi-level firing," something the average Filipino may not yet be aware of. Simply put, it means fireworks that are purposely set aglow at different heights.

There are now displays meant to be watched at eye level, he said.

Then there are also the "mid-range" calibers that go off just above the horizon, and the more familiar "high level" extravaganzas that are staged well over the city skyline.

Still to be introduced in the country are "nautical shells" which are designed to be fired from a barge and blow up even when falling on water.

"Watch out how the competitors manipulate our vision through multi-level firing," said Crisostomo, who is vice president for marketing of La Mancha Pyro Productions, a Makati-based company that also staged a fireworks festival in Manila in 2003 and 2004.

This is the reason why Pyro Olympics has a specially built viewing deck for the judges and paying audiences that offers a line of sight to all firing levels.

Those who just wish to enjoy the fireworks show off-site from a nearby street or building may not see the low-level displays, Crisostomo said.

The viewing deck is located at the Esplanade area of the Mall of Asia complex in Pasay City. Admission is P100 per person.

Competing teams

The competing teams are from Australia and China (which mounted their show on Dec. 26), Germany and Korea (Dec. 27), Russia and the United Kingdom (Dec. 28), United States and South Africa (Dec. 29) and United Arab Emirates (Dec. 30).

Each team may require as many as 40 members and three to four days to set up equipment—including a computerized timing system—on a barge on Manila Bay.

The "Pyro Olympics" shows run 7:30 p.m. to 9: 20 p.m.

A Filipino team will put on a show on Dec. 30 but the Philippines, being the host country, is not in competition.

Delay likely in Naia Terminal 3 opening next year, says Pimentel

By TJ Burgonio and Leila B. Salaverria

THE OPENING OF THE MOTHballed Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 could be delayed anew because the government continues to defy a court order to compensate the private contractor, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. has warned.

The state-of-the-art terminal is scheduled to be opened in the first quarter next year, but this will likely be derailed after the Office of the Solicitor General decided to appeal a Supreme Court ruling requiring the government to pay Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco) some $62 million or P3 billion, he said.

Obsolete

"If they keep postponing the opening of the airport, I'm afraid its facilities and equipment may deteriorate and become obsolete," Pimentel said in a statement Tuesday.

Last week, the high court upheld the order of Judge Henrick Gingoyon of the Pasay City Regional Trial Court allowing Piatco to receive $62 million of a government deposit. Piatco is the consortium led by Germany's Fraport AG that built the terminal.

International arbitration

President Macapagal-Arroyo revoked Piatco's contract with the government, noting that the terms were disadvantageous to the government. The deal was signed by her predecessor, Joseph Estrada, who is now in jail and on trial on plunder charges.

Fraport AG had demanded compensation of $465 million for the terminal project and the case is currently under international arbitration. The project was started in 1994.

In December 2004, the lower court issued a writ of possession in favor of the government but later allowed the release to Piatco of the $62-million deposit as a requirement for the takeover of Naia 3. However, the government questioned the ruling before the high tribunal, arguing that it was only willing to pay a deposit of $9 million.

Pimentel said the public was stumped by the government's refusal to settle its financial obligation, pointing out that even Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita was worried that an appeal on the case might take months for the high tribunal to resolve.

SC decision

In a related development, Ilocos Sur Rep. Salacnib Baterina and Cebu Rep. Clavel Martinez are set to contest the SC decision allowing the government to take over Naia 3 after paying P3 billion to Piatco.

Lawyer Jose Bernas said his clients Baterina and Clavel would file a motion for reconsideration as intervenors in the first week of January.

Bernas explained that the SC decision only dealt with how the government would expropriate Naia 3—which is by paying Piatco P3 billion—but did not say if the act itself was proper since the government had not raised the issue.

Compensate

"The Supreme Court was not asked to resolve those threshold questions. First of all, are they [Piatco] entitled to compensation? If so, how much? Is expropriation the proper remedy?" Bernas said.

"The question here that will be carried to other government contracts is this: Do we reward illegally obtained contracts? If we are going to compensate them, do we compensate them in the concept of a reward? The government has to protect itself and in the course of protecting itself, it does not have to reward illegalities," he said.

'Better learning the Internet cafe way'

By Frank Cimatu
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—THE BETTER question to 'Why Juan can't read' might be 'Where Juan can read.'

Now that the nation's students are out of school because of the Christmas break, this may be a good time to figure out why the country's educational system is at the bottom of the pile in Asia.

Improve educational system

Educator Henry Tenedero said one example of how Filipinos could improve their educational system is by looking at the Internet cafes, which are frequented by the youth.

Tenedero said fewer than 7 percent of fourth-year high school students passed the English examination in the National Achievement Test (NAT). Only 13 percent passed the mathematics test and a little over 1 percent passed the science test.

In the Trends in International Math and Science Survey (TIMSS) in 1998, the Philippines ranked 36 of 39 countries in both math and science.

Lighting, music

In the 2003 survey, the Philippines ranked 41 of 45 countries in both categories, Tenedero said.

Politicians and others have called for drastic changes in the educational system but, Tenedero said, what might do the trick may be found in the Internet cafes, like subtle changes in lighting, music and temperature, and even the nutritional intake of the students.

He said comparing the quiet and stifled structure of a normal classroom with the noisy free-wheeling Internet cafe atmosphere might provide the answer.

He said some students can better do their assignments in the chaotic atmosphere of the cafes.

"It is not enough that we improve the curriculum, textbooks and subject matter. Recognizing the different learning styles of the students can dramatically improve learning," said Tenedero, who heads the Center for Learning and Teaching in the Philippines.

Learning styles

He said students learn when teachers match their learning styles.

He said pouring money into education is not the only answer, citing the Lope de Vera National High School of Northern Samar which topped the 2004 NAT.

He said students can also have fun while learning, citing a medical school in Cebu that has its medical students rap out their anatomy subjects.

Dunn & Dunn

Under the international learning style (ILS) or the Dunn & Dunn learning and teaching styles model, there are five stimuli that a teacher should recognize. These are environmental, emotional, sociological, physiological and psychological stimuli. Almost 30 countries have adopted the ILS in their national teaching curricula.

Tenedero, who is only one of 50 acknowledged ILS trainors worldwide, said among his students here are teachers who plan to work in the United States.

GSIS targets gov't agencies

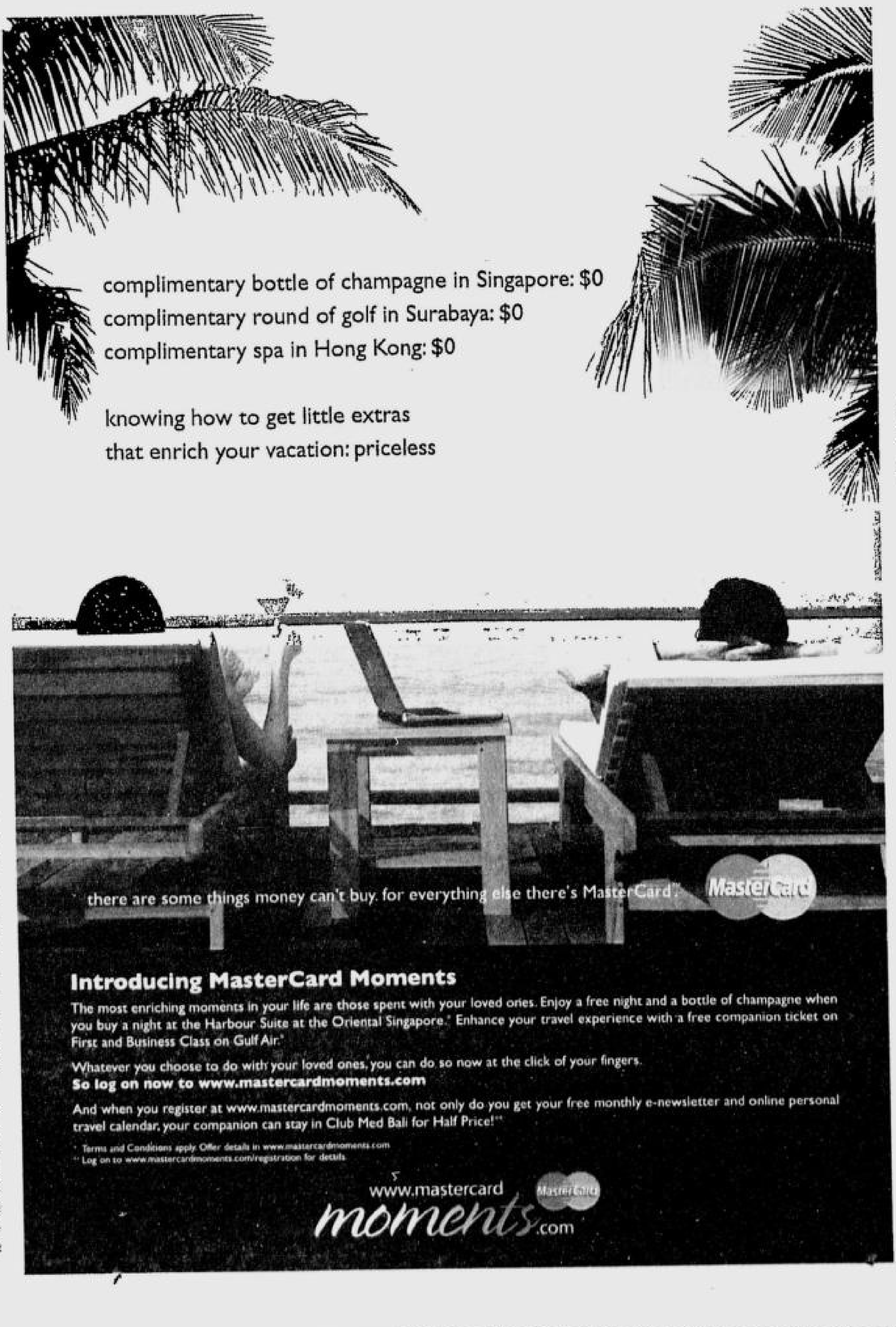
THE GOVERNMENT Service Insurance System (GSIS) plans to make 2006 a banner year by going after government agencies remiss in turning over GSIS premiums and loan repayments.

GSIS president and general manager Winston Garcia said the state pension fund would step up negotiations with delinquent government agencies to enter into restructuring agreements on their obligations, but warned that those that continue to refuse to settle their accounts would be charged in court.

"While we are continuously reaching out to our members, we are also reaching out to agencies that have been remiss in their obligations with the system," Garcia said.

This year, the GSIS entered into restructuring agreements with 10 government agencies, allowing for the resumption of GSIS benefits to their employees.

Is also filed cases against 47 government agencies that refused to remit premium contributions to the GSIS, despite numerous reminders to settle their accounts.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US surveillance up sharply since 9/11

WASHINGTON—FEDERAL APPLICATIONS FOR a special US court to authorize secret surveillance rose sharply after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, and the panel required changes to the requests at an even greater rate, government documents show.

President George W. Bush acknowledged this month he had secretly ordered the National Security Agency to eavesdrop on the international phone conversations and e-mail of Americans suspected of links to terrorists without approval from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court.

The domestic spying order has set off a furious debate over whether the war on terrorism gives Bush a blank check when it comes to civil liberties and whether the president, in fact, broke the law.

The Justice Department's reports to the US Congress on the surveillance court's activities show the Bush administration made 5,645 applications for electronic surveillance and physical searches from 2001 through 2004, the most recent year for which figures are available. In the previous four years, the court received a total of 3,436.

The 11-judge panel modified 179 of the Bush administration's requests. By contrast, only one was modified in the preceding four years. The court has reportedly handled almost 20,000 applications since it was set up and has rejected only a handful.

Reasons for the modifications were not stated and could range from minor alterations to more substantive changes.

The highly classified court was set up by the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA, in the wake of Cold War spy fears and President Richard Nixon's misuse of US intelligence agencies to spy on the anti-Vietnam War movement and other political dissidents.

The Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations has filed a Freedom of Information request with federal agencies seeking government records relating to Bush's executive orders authorizing surveillance of Americans.

The group said on Tuesday it also filed a similar request with the Justice and Energy Departments for information on the secret radiation monitoring of Muslim sites in six US cities, first reported by US News and World Report.

The magazine reported last week that more than 100 sites, including private homes, were monitored without court approval as required by FISA.

"We are concerned that, under this secretive program, our government has overstepped constitutional bounds by intruding on private property without any probable cause or valid court orders," CAIR's national legal director, Arsalan Iftikhar, said in a statement.

Bush has said FISA was intended for "long-term monitoring" and that the government after Sept. 11 needed to move "faster and quicker" to protect Americans.

Bush said he had reauthorized the domestic spying program more than 30 times since the Sept. 11 attacks and would continue to do so. *Reuters*

Iraq Shiites, Kurds agree to open gov't to Sunnis

ARBIL, IRAQ—LEADERS OF THE SHIITE and Kurdish blocs that emerged triumphant in this month's Iraqi election agreed on Tuesday to push ahead with efforts to bring Sunni and other parties into a grand coalition government.

The visit of Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim of the Shiite Islamist Alliance to the Kurdish capital Arbil opened a series of planned meetings among rival factions intended to ease friction over election results which Sunni and secular parties say have been rigged and to begin building a consensus administration.

"We agreed on the principle of forming a government involving all the parties with a wide popular base," Kurdish regional leader Masoud Barzani told a joint news conference after talks with Hakim, the dominant force in the Alliance.

Hakim, whose bloc has run the interim government for the past year in coalition with the Kurds, was due to meet the other main Kurdish leader, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, on Wednesday, launching a series of bilateral meetings that will include Sunni Arab and secular leaders disappointed in the vote.

In Baghdad, several thousand supporters of secular former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi marched in the latest street protest against the results of the Dec. 15 ballot. They want a rerun of a vote that handed close to a majority to the Alliance, whose armed supporters they accuse of forming Islamist death squads.

Privately, however, many disappointed leaders acknowledge the results will stand and say they will negotiate a coalition.

After meeting Hakim, Talabani will see, among others, Allawi, a secular Shiite, and Sunnis Adnan al-Dulaimi and Tariq al-Hashemi of the Accordance Front, Planning Minister Barham Saleh, a senior official in Talabani's party, said.

"The Kurdish Alliance is making contacts with the political blocs to prepare for a national unity government," Saleh said.

"These are preliminary and bilateral discussions between the Kurds and other groups... There are expectation that at the beginning of next year there will be bigger meetings." Sounding a cautious note ahead of negotiations that no one expects to produce a government for many weeks, Jawad al-Maliki of SCIRI ally Dawa, said: "(Hakim) is not there to negotiate about forming a government... They might, in general, talk about the new government and the results of the election. *Reuters*

OSAMA BIN LADEN

Where in the world is most wanted man?

PARIS—HE HAS NOT ISSUED any public statement all year. Speculation has grown over his influence, health and even possible death. Where is the Western world's most wanted man, Osama Bin Laden?

BIN LADEN

The al-Qaida leader's period of silence is the longest since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, offering no clues to the whereabouts or fate of a man who this year appears to have quietly slipped off the radar.

Bin Laden has not been heard of since a Dec. 27, 2004 audiotape in which he anointed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Iraq's most wanted man, as al-Qaida's leader in the war-torn country.

Just before, on Dec. 16, 2004, a video surfaced where he also called on his fighters to strike Gulf oil supplies and warned Saudi leaders they risked a popular uprising.

Since then—silence. Regular interventions by al-Qaida's number two Ayman al-Zawahiri, seen as the ideological brains of the network, has only served to feed feverish speculation on what has happened to bin Laden.

Zawahiri claimed in a videotape released in September that bin Laden was still alive and leading "jihad" or holy war against the West.

"Al-Qaida for holy war is still, thanks to God, a base for jihad. Its prince Osama bin Laden, may God protect him, still leads the jihad," said Zawahiri.

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf said recently he did not know whether Bin Laden was dead or alive, adding that he would not like to speculate over his fate.

The commander of US troops in Afghanistan, General Karl Eikenberry, has insisted that bin Laden was still considered alive, and that US forces continue their hunt for him.

Seemingly more candid was CIA director Porter Goss, who recently told ABC news channel that Bin Laden's hideout was known and implied that the CIA knew more than it could reveal.

US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, meanwhile, this week said he doubted that Bin Laden was now capable of supervising the global operations of the militant organization.

The total eclipse of Bin Laden also gave rise to various speculation on Islamist websites, with some admirers of the terror chief already contemplating that he might be dead.

"Bin Laden, tracked by the intelligence services who are on his heels, is hiding somewhere along the mountain frontiers between Pakistan and Afghanistan," opined one blogger.

Another claimed that "Abu Abdullah (Bin Laden) has deliberately decided to stop all communications to avoid being located by gigantic US surveillance devices." *AFP*

Colorado student who died in tsunami still touches family, friends

DENVER—ROBERT WEISSBERG remembers when his daughter Nicole was a child roaming the Gramercy Park Hotel in New York, ordering peanut butter and jelly sandwiches in the dining room or playing on luggage carts in the halls with her younger brother.

In her 20s, she returned to drink Scotch at the bar of the hotel owned by her grandfather. When it was sold after his death, she dreamed of someday buying it back.

"She was the one who had the drive and ambition to carry on the business," Weissberg said of his 27-year-old daughter.

Nicole Weissberg, a business student at the University of Denver, was among thousands of people killed by the tsunami that swept across the Indian Ocean a year ago.

Robert Weissberg comes alive when telling stories about his daughter—about how she traveled the world but still thought to call him when an ATM machine didn't work during a backpacking trip in the Andes.

Or how, in the middle of political arguments with her boyfriend, Morgan Browning, she would take a break to e-mail her father, a former political science professor at the University of Illinois. Then she would pick up the argument again with more ammunition.

But Robert Weissberg's demeanor changes when he recalls Nicole's funeral in March, not long after her body was identified and returned to the United States.

"It's over. It's finished. I'm trying to forget, the grief at least," he says.

Nicole's body was returned to the United States months after the tsunami, but that hasn't brought Weissberg closure.

He still remembers the little girl he likens to Eloise, the children's book character who lived in another New York hotel, The Plaza. He lives a few blocks from ground zero in New York and thinks about how many relatives of the Sept. 11 victims never found a trace of their loved ones.

"To me, there's nothing physical about this," he says. "It's all memories. It's all experience."

Nicole had traveled abroad extensively before her final trip, when she traveled alone to Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos before arriving in Thailand. *AP*

DAVAO CITY WATER DISTRICT
J.P. Laurel Ave., Davao City
Tel. #221-9400

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

1. The *Davao City Water District*, with the *Approved Budget for 2005* intends to apply the sum of ***Thirteen Million Seven Hundred Twenty Seven Thousand Thirteen Pesos and Sixty Seven Cents (P13,727,013.67)*** being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for ***Softstarters, Electrical Facilities and Controls, Submersible Rewindable Motor and Vertical Multi-Stage In-line Centrifugal Pump, Electric Actuators, Chain Wrenches (Chain Tong), Compact Chlorinator Cabinet, Wall Mounted Chlorine Dioxide Generator System and Chlorine Regulator, Various Computer Hardwares & Softwares, Portable Pressure Recorder & Chart Paper Disc, Leak Detector and Full Cartridge Mechanical Seal.*** Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

2. The *Davao City Water District* now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the following:

PACKAGE	DESCRIPTION	ABC
1	4 units – Softstarters (50HP, 100HP, 200HP & 250HP)	P 1,175,000.00
2	3 sets – Electrical Facilities & Controls (PW #5-100 HP, PW # VES 21, 250 HP & PW #2 – 250 HP	P 1,588,413.67
3	3 units – Submersible Rewindable Motors (100HP, 125HP & 200 HP). 1 unit – 1 HP Vertical Multi-Stage In-Line Centrifugal Pump	P 1,852,000.00
4	6 units – Electrical Actuators	P 750,000.00
5	4 units – Heavy Duty Chain Wrenches (Chain Tong)	P 500,000.00
6	1 unit – Compact Chlorinator Cabinet; 3 units – Wall Mounted Chlorine Dioxide Generator System 2 sets – Chlorine regulator	P 1,650,000.00
7	1 set – Network Attached Storage and Software	P 600,000.00
8	1 set – Computer Network Firewall appliance	P 440,000.00
9	12 pcs – Drawing Software, Power draft 4 pcs – Corel Draw	P 560,000.00
10	2 sets – Computer Aided Design and Drafting Software 1 set – Water Distribution Modeling & Management Software	P 1,900,000.00
11	2 units – Portable Pressure Recorder with 4 pcs. Cartridge pen and 10 boxes Chart Paper Disc	P 321,600.00
12	1 set – Leak Detecting Equipment consisting of Multi-point correlator and electronic ground microphone	P 2,000,000.00
13	6 pcs – Full Cartridge Mechanical Seal	P 390,000.00

Delivery of the GOODS is required by *MAY 8, 2006*. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure

4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from *Davao City Water District* and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 a.m up to 5:00 p.m.

5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of ***P1,500.00/ package***. The method of payment will be on Cash Basis. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

6. The *Davao City Water District* will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on ***JANUARY 19, 2006 at 9:00 o'clock A.M. at DCWD BAC-A Secretariat Office, J.P. Laurel Ave., Bajada, Davao City.***

7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before the ***bidding scheduled time and date at 9:00 o'clock A.M.*** All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form of *cash or Manager's check* and in the amount of ***P11,750.00 for PACKAGE 1, P15,884.13 for PACKAGE 2, P18,520.00 for PACKAGE 3, P7,500.00 for PACKAGE 4, P5,000.00 for PACKAGE 5, P16,500.00 for PACKAGE 6, P6,000.00 for PACKAGE 7, P4,400.00 for PACKAGE 8, P5,600.00 for PACKAGE 9, P19,000.00 for PACKAGE 10, P3,216.00 for PACKAGE 11, P20,000.00 for PACKAGE 12 and P3,900.00 for PACKAGE 13.*** Late Bids shall not be accepted.

8. Bid opening shall be at ***9:00 o'clock A.M. at DCWD BAC-A Secretariat Office, J.P. Laurel Ave., Bajada, Davao City*** on the following schedule.

PACKAGE No.	BIDDING SCHEDULE, TIME & DATE
1	February 1, 2006 (9.00 A.M.)
2	February 1, 2006 (2.00 P.M.)
3	February 2, 2006 (9.00 A.M.)
4 AND 5	February 2, 2006 (2.00 P.M.)
6	February 3, 2006 (9.00 A.M.)
7, 8 AND 9	February 3, 2006 (2.00 P.M.)
10	February 6, 2006 (9.00 A.M.)
11	February 6, 2006 (2.00 P.M.)
12	February 7, 2006 (9.00 A.M.)
13	February 7, 2006 (2.00 P.M.)

Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below

9. The *Davao City Water District* reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Davao City Water District
BAC-A
J.P. Laurel Ave., Bajada, Davao City
Tel. No. 221-9400 (8000)
E-mail add dcwd@davao-water.gov.ph
Fax No. 224-5302
Website www.davao-water.gov.ph

(Sgd.) VIRGINIA S. MARIMON
BAC-A Chairperson

(PDI–Dec. 29, 2005 & Jan. 5, 2006)

PHILIPPINE PORTS AUTHORITY
PORT DISTRICT OFFICE OF VISAYAS
CIP COMPLEX, SERGING OSMEÑA BLVD., NORTH RECLAMATION AREA,
CEBU CITY, PHILIPPINES
TEL. NO. (032) 2323401-04, FAX NO. (032) 2321990
e-mail pdavisayas@ppavis.com; website: www.ppavis.com

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The PHILIPPINE PORTS AUTHORITY, Port District Office – Visayas, through its Bids and Awards Committee – Engineering Project (BAC-EP), invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for the hereunder contract.

A:

Name of Contract	**Improvement of Guimbal Port**
Location	Guimbal, Iloilo
Brief Description	Construction RC Deck
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)	P 9,399,541.64
Source of Funds	PPA Corporate Fund
Contract Duration	One Hundred Nine (109) Calendar Days
PCAB Registration	Small B "Ports, Harbor & Offshore Engineering

Required Equipments

1)	1 unit	Bar Bender	Owned
2)	2 units	Bar Cutter	Owned
3)	2 units	One Bagger Concrete Mixer	Owned
4)	2 units	Concrete Vibrator	Owned
5)	1 unit	Boom Truck	Owned
6)	1 unit	Diesel Hammer	Owned/Leased
7)	1 unit	Drop Hammer	Owned/Leased
8)	1 unit	Truckmounted Crane	Owned/Leased
9)	1 unit	Welding Machine	Owned

B:

Name of Contract	**Proposed RC Deck & Causeway, Extension**
Location	Port of Libertad, Antique
Brief Description	Construction RC Deck & Causeway
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)	P 9,056,483.89
Source of Funds	PPA Corporate Fund
Contract Duration	One Hundred Sixty Eight (168) Calendar Days
PCAB Registration	Small B "Ports, Harbor & Offshore Engineering"

Required Equipments

1)	2 units	One Bagger Concrete Mixer	Owned
2)	2 units	Bar Cutter	Owned
3)	2 units	Concrete Vibrator	Owned
4)	1 unit	Backhoe	Owned/Leased
5)	1 unit	Bar Bender	Owned
6)	1 unit	Boom Truck	Owned
7)	1 unit	Diesel Hammer	Owned/Leased
8)	1 unit	Drop Hammer	Owned/Leased
9)	1 unit	Motor Grader	Owned/Leased
10)	1 unit	Dump Truck	Owned/Leased
11)	1 unit	Vibratory Road Roller	Owned/Leased
12)	1 unit	Truckmounted Crane	Owned/Leased
13)	1 unit	Rock Grapple	Owned/Leased
14)	1 unit	Welding Machine	Owned

C:

Name of Contract	**Proposed Widening of Passenger (Tourist) Access Lane**
Location	Port of Biri, Northern Samar
Brief Description	Construction of Causeway
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)	P 7,478,172.83
Source of Funds	PPA Corporate Fund
Contract Duration	One Hundred (100) Calendar Days
PCAB Registration	Small B "Port & Offshore Engineering"

Required Equipments

1)	2 units	One Bagger Concrete Mixer	Owned
2)	2 units	Concrete Vibrator	Owned
3)	1 unit	Welding Machine	Owned
4)	1 unit	Bar Cutter	Owned
5)	1 unit	Plate Compactor	Owned
6)	1 unit	Dump Truck	Owned/Leased

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB License applicable to the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least 50% of the ABC, and have key personnel and equipment (listed in the Eligibility Forms) available for the prosecution of the contract. The BAC will use non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids. The BAC will conduct post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bids Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The schedule of BAC activities is as follows:

BAC Activities		Schedule
1	Receipt from prospective bidders of Letters of Intent (LOI) including Application for Eligibility	January 12-18, 2006
2.	Issuance of Eligibility Forms	January 12-25, 2006
3.	Receipt of Eligibility Requirements	February 1, 2006

The BAC will issue to prospective bidders Eligibility Forms at Philippine Ports Authority, Port District Office – Visayas, CIP Complex, Serging Osmeña Blvd., North Reclamation Area, Cebu City upon their submission of a LOI, and upon their payment of a non-refundable amount of P1,100.00 (inclusive of VAT) to the Philippine Ports Authority, Port District Office – Visayas Cashier. Prospective bidders shall submit the Eligibility Requirements to the BAC at the said address. They may also obtain the results of the eligibility Check by the BAC at the same address

The BAC will issue Bidding Documents only to bidders declared by the BAC to be eligible for the bidding upon payment of a non-refundable amount of P11,000.00 (inclusive of VAT) to the Philippine Ports Authority, Port District Office – Visayas Cashier.

The Philippine Ports Authority, Port District Office – Visayas assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of their bids.

Approved by
(Sgd.) JAMES J. GANTALAO
BAC Chairman

(PDI – Dec. 29, 2005 & Jan. 6, 2006)

Inmates hold 200 hostages in Brazil

SÃO PAULO—INMATES AT A prison in Brazil's remote Amazon jungle were holding more than 200 people hostage, demanding the return of their leader from another prison. And while authorities agreed to bring him back, both sides remained at an impasse Tuesday, waiting for the other to make the first move.

Armed with makeshift knives, the inmates began their uprising during Sunday's visiting hours at the Urso Branco State Prison in Rondonia's state capital, Porto Velho, some 2,500 km northwest of São Paulo.

The same prison was the site of a bloody five-day uprising in April 2004 that left 14 inmates dead, many of them hacked to death and tossed from the prison's roof. Prisoners held hostage about 170 relatives then, most of them women.

This time, the inmates said they would release the hostages after one of their leaders—Edinildo Paula de Souza, who had been transferred to another facility last week—was returned to Urso Branco.

Paula de Souza escaped from Urso Branco on Nov. 24 through a tunnel he had dug in the prison's vegetable garden. He was recaptured Dec. 21 and sent the next day to the Nova Mamore prison some 300 km from Urso Branco.

"We agreed to return Edinildo as soon as the hostages were released and after a complete search for weapons and drugs," Renato Eduardo de Souza, head of the state's public safety department, said by telephone on Tuesday. "But they refused, demanding that Edinildo be returned first."

Another inmate demand, which prison officials said would not be met, was the dismissal of the prosecutor who ordered Paula de Souza's transfer. *AP*

Israel jets hit Palestinian base in Lebanon

JERUSALEM—ISRAELI WARplanes attacked a Palestinian guerrilla group's training base in Lebanon on Wednesday, the army said, after a rocket strike on an Israeli town raised border tension to its highest level in years.

"The message is to the government of Lebanon which is responsible for preventing terror attacks from its territory," Israel's northern commander Major General Udi Adam told Reuters.

"The State of Israel holds the Lebanese government responsible for these attacks, in that it has done nothing to dismantle the terror organizations operating from within Lebanon, in violation of UN decisions 425 and 1559," the army said in a statement.

The attack targeted a base belonging to the pro-Syrian Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) in Na'meh south of Beirut and slightly wounded two of its fighters, the group's spokesperson Anwar Raja told Reuters.

He denied the group's involvement in the rocket attack against northern Israel.

"The air strike is an Israeli attempt to depict the presence of Palestinian groups in Lebanon as a source of instability while they (the Israelis) continue to violate Lebanon's sovereignty in the air, land and sea," he said.

"Israel wants to bring (UN Security Council) resolution 1559 under the spotlight but we are confident that the Lebanese authorities are aware of this blatant attempt." The 2004 resolution in part demands the disarmament of all militia in Lebanon, a reference to the pro-Syrian Hizbollah and other Palestinian militant groups. The Beirut government has yet to implement the resolution.

The Lebanese army said in a statement two Israeli warplanes fired two rockets at dawn. A Reuters photographer said the strike also smashed windows of several buildings nearby.

Adam blamed Palestinian guerrillas for attempting to escalate tension along the Israel-Lebanon border by slamming at least three Katyusha rockets into the northern town of Kiryat Shemona shortly before midnight on Tuesday.

It was the first rocket attack in years against the town—which was a regular target of Katyusha rocket strikes until Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon in 2000 after a 22-year occupation.

The Katyusha rockets scored a direct hit on three homes, wounding three people and sending others into shock.

"I thought the gas canister blew up because I didn't think that at this time of the day there would be Katyushas in the house," David Goldstein, whose house was badly damaged in the attack, told Israel Radio.

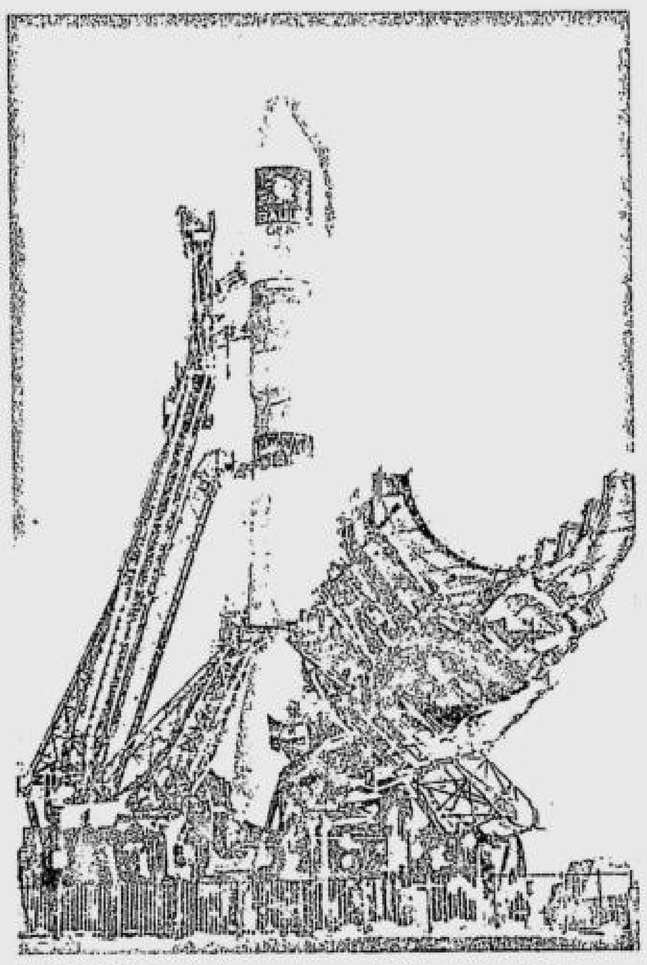
Residents of Kiryat Shemona were ordered to enter bomb shelters following the strike. Explosions were heard overnight near the northern village of Shlomi indicating additional Katyusha strikes, Israeli media reported.

The army was not immediately able to confirm the reports.

"We will not tolerate a situation in which Katyusha fire becomes a routine of daily life," Adam said.

Tension along the Israel-Lebanon border has heightened in recent months due to international pressure against Syria over the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri and demands that Iran, a supporter of Hizbollah, halt its nuclear program, Adam said.

The killing of Hariri in February sparked massive protests that forced Syria to bow to world pressure to withdraw its troops from Lebanon in April after 29 years. *Reuters*



A RUSSIAN rocket carrying a satellite of the Galileo network is seen at its launching pad at Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan Dec. 28. REUTERS

Europe launches satellite

MOSCOW—EUROPE LAUNCHED Wednesday the first test satellite of its Galileo navigation system, designed to rival the reigning US system and put positioning by satellite into civilian hands.

After being mired in delays for over two years, the Galileo project finally got off the ground when a Russian Soyuz rocket carrying the test GIOVE-A satellite blasted off from Russia's launch site at Baikonur, Kazakhstan, at 0519 GMT.

Marco Falcone of the European Space Agency (ESA) told reporters that all was going well.

However, it will take more than seven hours before the mission could be determined a success or failure, when the satellite's solar panels and transmission systems are verified as functioning properly.

The GIOVE-A satellite will test various technologies including an atomic clock that ESA says is the most exact ever sent into space.

The launcher's first three stages separated as scheduled, around nine minutes after the launch.

The fourth stage, dubbed Fregat, would take the satellite to medium orbit, at the altitude of 23,000 km, which it was due to reach three hours and 42 minutes after the launch.

Galileo will allow Europe to gain strategic independence, as the satellite system had become indispensable for regulating air, maritime and lately automobile traffic.

The launch, originally scheduled for Monday, had been delayed by two days after the discovery of anomalies in the solar stations tasked with following the satellite's progress in space.

This is the first time that the ESA, which co-pilots the Galileo project's initial phase with the European Union, is launching a satellite for a medium orbit, which would guarantee stability to the satellite but is little explored as to its radio-electric environment.

Galileo will both compete with and complement the current US Global Positioning System (GPS), which was originally developed for military targeting and positioning.

The European system was the first to be designed for strictly civilian use and will cost an estimated 3.8 billion euros ($4.5 billion).

The United States and the EU last year reached an accord to adopt common operating standards for the two systems, overcoming American concerns that the Galileo system will compromise the security of GPS, on which the US military is heavily dependent.

Galileo will also be compatible with the Russian GLONASS network, which like the American system is controlled by military operators that cannot guarantee to maintain an uninterrupted service.

According to ESA, Galileo, which will be under civilian control, is designed to deliver real-time positioning accuracy down to the meter range, which is unprecedented for a publicly available system.

It will guarantee service under all but the most extreme circumstances and will inform users within seconds of a failure of any satellite, which will make it especially valuable where safety is crucial, such as running trains, guiding cars and landing aircraft.

The project's next phase will be the launch of a second GIOVE-B test satellite in 2006, followed by four working satellites by 2008. The ultimate goal remains a constellation of 30 satellites encircling the globe.

The date for opening the network to commercial use has been pushed back two years to 2010. *AFP*

Chinese scientists claim new bird flu drug better than Tamiflu

BEIJING—CHINESE SCIENTISTS SAY THEY have created a drug to treat humans infected with bird flu that is superior to the existing and widely stockpiled drug Tamiflu, state media said Tuesday.

Like Tamiflu, which is made by Swiss pharmaceutical group Roche, the new medicine is a neuraminidase inhibitor that prevents the virus from spreading to other cells, but costs about a third of the price, China Daily said.

The Chinese drug was developed by a research group at the Academy of Military Medical Sciences, which could not be reached for comment about the report.

"We have completed clinical experiments, and find it is more effective on humans than Tamiflu," the newspaper quoted Li Song, a leading scientist in the academy's research group, as saying.

No details were given on whether clinical tests had been conducted on the drug and whether it had been approved for production and sales.

The new drug will cost only a quarter to a third of the price of Tamiflu, which sells for 29.8 yuan ($3.73) per capsule in China, Li told a high-profile forum on prevention and control of avian influenza Monday.

He said the new medicine would be produced by domestic firms and stockpiled for use in the event of a bird flu pandemic.

A spokesperson for the World Health Organization's China office said he had no information about the drug.

Tamiflu is acknowledged as being effective against human infections of the deadly H5N1 virus and is being stockpiled by various countries for use in case of a pandemic.

China has reported six human infections of bird flu, including two fatalities, and 31 outbreaks among poultry this year.

This month, Shanghai Pharmaceutical Group (SPG) became the first company in Asia to secure a license from Roche to produce and sell a generic version of Tamiflu.

China has announced several breakthroughs on bird flu in recent days, but it was unclear whether the discoveries had been subjected to international scrutiny.

State media said Monday that China has developed a new, more efficient and cheaper bird flu vaccine which can also protect its massive poultry population against deadly Newcastle disease.

One billion shots are expected to be produced by the end of this month. The vaccine will be used from the beginning of next year in combination with other treatments.

China has the world's largest poultry industry, with 14 billion poultry produced a year. Bird flu has cost the industry more than 60 billion yuan ($7.5 billion) in losses between October and December alone, China Daily said, citing official figures. *AFP*

WORLDBRIEFS

30 killed in Indian collision

NEW DELHI—At least 30 people were killed when a bus collided with a truck on a highway in the western state of Gujarat on Wednesday, police said. The accident took place when the vehicles crashed into each other near the town of Baruch in Gujarat, police officer G. S. Malik said. Immediately after the collision, the bus was engulfed in flames, he said. Twenty-two people were killed in the crash and eight people later died of burns in the hospital. The bus was traveling from the western city of Bombay to Ahmadabad, the capital of Gujarat state. *AP*

Al-Qaida suspect dies

RIYADH—A suspected member of al-Qaida, Mohammed Abdul Rahman al-Suwailmi, captured on Tuesday after bloody clashes with Saudi police in the central Qassim province, has died of his wounds, an interior ministry spokesperson announced early Wednesday. In a communique quoted by the official SPA news agency he said a second suspect was being sought by security forces after hijacking a car occupied by women in the sector where the clashes took place. Suwailmi "succumbed to his wounds and it turned out that he was wanted by the security authorities," the spokesperson said. He ranked number seven on the list of the 36 most wanted militant suspects in Saudi Arabia. *AFP*

Colombian rebels kill 28 soldiers

BOGOTA—Marxist rebels killed 28 Colombian soldiers on a mission to destroy coca plants on Tuesday, the worst blow against the military for years as tensions rise ahead of 2006 elections. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, attacked the soldiers near the town of Vista Hermosa in southern Meta province, an army spokesperson said. The soldiers were providing security for another army team which was manually destroying the raw material of cocaine, the army said, without giving further details. It gave the death toll as 24, but the defense ministry later said that 28 soldiers had been killed in the attack. *Reuters*

Nigeria oil pipeline on fire

WARRI, NIGERIA—Fires have broken out along a pipeline in remote southern Nigeria, a state oil company official said on Tuesday, a week after unknown gunmen attacked two other pipelines in the volatile Niger Delta. The official said he did not know the cause of the blazes on the pipeline, which carries petroleum products from a refinery in Warri, the oil hub of Delta state, to northern Nigeria. "Early this morning we put out one but we are still battling the others," said J.A. Uwaseba, deputy area manager for operations of the Pipelines and Products Marketing Company (PPMC), an arm of the Nigerian state oil company. There was no immediate word on casualties, if any. *Reuters*

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Across the NATION

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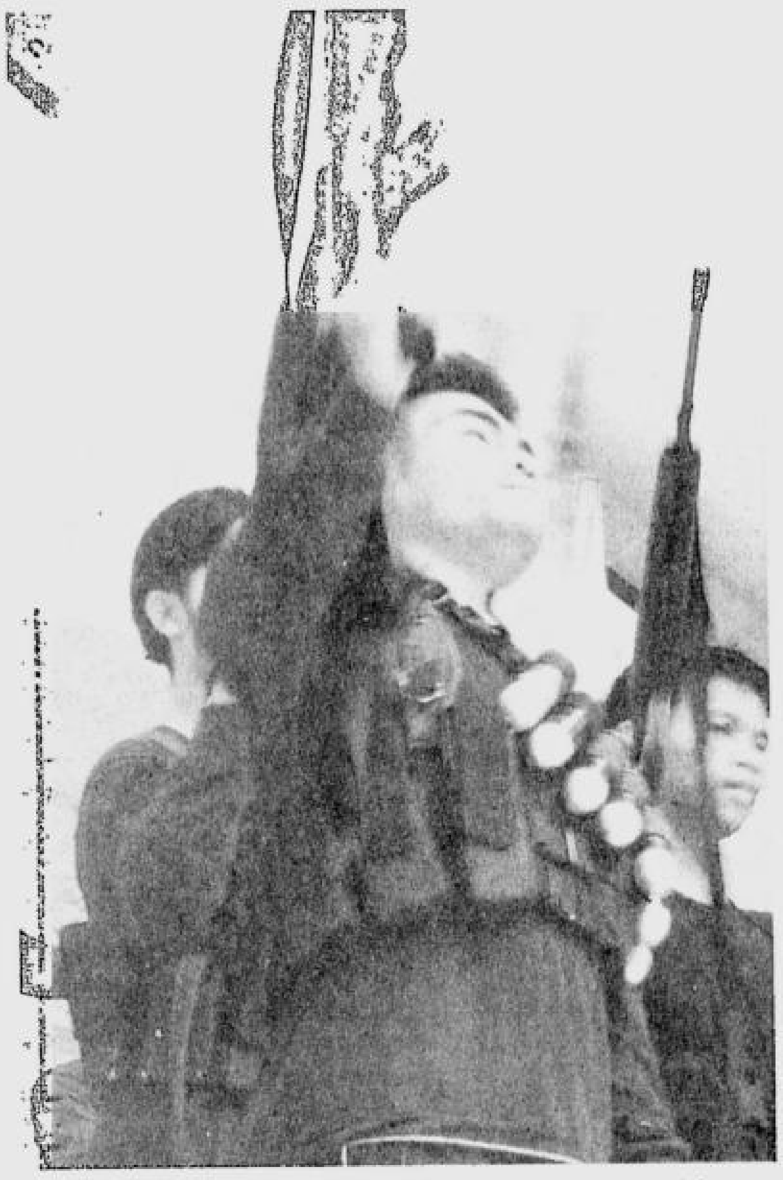
NPA tax shows 2 gov'ts in RP, says CPP leader



NEW PEOPLE'S Army guerrillas celebrate the anniversary of the founding of the communist party at an undisclosed camp in Quezon province.

TINA CASSION

LUCENA CITY—FOR MOST foreign companies doing business in the country, the payment of the so-called revolutionary tax to New People's Army rebels has become a "normal business process," communist spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal boasted yesterday.

"These foreign capitalists have long realized that there are now two existing governments in the country. One is the reactionary government, the other one is the revolutionary government headed by the Communist Party of the Philippines. That's the present reality of doing business here in the Philippines," Rosal said in a mobile phone interview.

However, he declined to be specific with the identities and nationalities of foreign companies that supposedly transacted with NPA guerrilla units over the payment of the rebel-imposed revolutionary tax.

"What I can say is that the emissaries of these foreign or even local business firms are more concerned with whether they are dealing with genuine NPA representatives or not. Apparently, they are aware that pseudo-NPA tax collectors or syndicates also abound," Rosal said.

He said that as a separate government, the communist movement has the right to impose taxes on people and businesses operating in its controlled areas.

Revolutionary taxes are charges on businesses or economic activities in areas under the control and influence of the NPA, the CPP's military wing.

Refusal to pay these taxes often results in damages and costly consequences in terms of burned equipment and disrupted business operations.

Earlier, Rosal admitted that a communist-owned Beijing-based road construction company had not been spared by the CPP-NPA from paying "revolutionary tax."

He said they no longer consider China a political ally for it has already abandoned the communist cause and embraced capitalism.

When asked about the reasons behind the NPA's incessant attacks against Globe Telecommunication towers but sparing its stiffest business rival, Smart, Rosal politely declined to give a categorical answer.

"You better ask the officials of the concerned business companies. They know much better," he said with a laugh.

But he quickly added that the wise and practical businessmen know what to do. "That it's much better for them to voluntarily negotiate than oppose our tax imposition."

The military said for this year alone, the NPA rebels had attacked at least 20 Globe cell site towers located in different parts of the country, damaging hundreds of millions of pesos worth of communication equipment.

Rosal said most of the business firms, whether foreign or local, no longer need to be informed of the rebel's tax policy.

"They voluntarily initiate the first move to discuss with us the amount through emissaries," he said.

Rosal clarified that they never resort to sending black ribbons or bullets.

"That's the style of pseudo-collectors to immediately create fear in the subject. The negotiations are brought to the negotiating table and formally discussed by both parties," he explained.

Rosal warned "unauthorized persons" not to meddle with the NPA's collection of the revolutionary tax lest they be construed by communist rebels as pseudo-rebel tax collectors or "NPA salapsap" as called in some areas. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Record rainfall level seen cause of floods in Mindoro, elsewhere

THE ABNORMAL WEATHER PATterns experienced early this month have caused simultaneous flooding in large areas of Luzon, Calapan in Mindoro Oriental and Palawan, and neighboring Asian countries like Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam.

Data from The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomic Services Administration (Pagasa) indicate the total rainfall from Dec. 1 to 19 amounted to more than 400 millimeters in the entire eastern seaboard due to the effects of the northeast monsoon, passage of cold fronts and easterly waves.

Vietnam's coastal provinces were the worst-hit by the floods which caused landslides, while the flooding in southern Thailand has affected a million people and will take at least one month to recede. Malaysia's state airport and major highways were also affected as the flooding has been deemed the worst in 30 years.

Nathaniel Cruz, Pagasa Weather Bureau chief, said in a report that except for northeastern Luzon and southern Mindanao, the entire archipelago received above normal rainfall during the period.

In Calapan, Mindoro, a recent tropical depression worsened the monsoon rains, causing the province to experience 415 millimeters of rainfall from the normal 129 millimeters, while rainfall over Puerto Princesa was over five times the normal level of 90 millimeters at 511 millimeters.

With the Bucayao dike still unrepaired and with the continuous monsoon rains, residents have expressed concern about the resurgence of rising floodwaters in at least several villages.

Residents started to evacuate after seeing waters rise knee-high in Barangay Biga, more than 10 km away from the city proper.

At least six villages were already under water yesterday, city administrator Salvador Leachon said.

If the same flooding experienced earlier would occur, Leachon said, some 60 villages would again be under water, affecting 15,000 to 20,000 residents.

The city government already sent flood warning signals to the residents yesterday afternoon.

The Philippine Red Cross-Oriental Mindoro Chapter started to deliver food rations and reminded evacuees about maintaining proper hygiene and sanitation.

Rescuers were on a standby with their rubber boats.

Two floods have hit the city and nearby towns within a period of 10 days, the worst in their experience, according to evacuees interviewed by the INQUIRER.

While floods subsided on Christmas Day, residents continued to fear the rise of floodwaters.

Residents attributed the heavy flooding to the denudation of mountain forests.

But others blamed the construction of wrong infrastructure projects to prevent flooding.

Dr. Manuel Tolentino, a senior property owner near the Bucayao River familiar with the river's history, said that since the last big flood on Dec. 26, 1993, water had diverted from the Mag-asawang Tubig River to the Bucayao River, causing the latter to overflow. *Madonna Virola and Marciano Virola Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

JERRY CARUAL/PCPO MALACAÑANG

SOUVENIR SHOT

President Macapagal-Arroyo gamely poses for pictures with visitors and residents in Baguio City during her vacation in the summer capital with her family.

ROUNDUP

Farmer, son slain

COTABATO CITY—Unidentified gunmen shot and killed a farmer and his adopted son in Barangay Tamontaka Sinco here on Christmas Eve, police said. "We are still trying to determine the reason for the killing," Senior Insp. Samson Obatay, police investigator, said. Obatay said the bodies of Dong Guianid and Amil Diocolano were riddled with bullets from an M-16 Armalite rifle and a handgun. Obatay said the victims were asleep when they were attacked.

Charlie C. Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Prisoner kills guard

LUCENA CITY—A prisoner bolted from the jail of Candelaria, Quezon on Christmas Eve, leaving a jail guard dead. A police report said Jail Officer 3 Melchor Garcia, 31 and a resident of Barangay Gulang-Gulang in this city, allegedly allowed the suspect, Joven Avina, 31, detained for illegal possession of firearm, to help in the preparation of *noche buena* in the jail kitchen shortly before Christmas Eve. While the victim was watching TV, the suspect allegedly sneaked out from behind and smashed his jailer with a hammer in the back of the head. He then dragged Garcia inside the vacant cell for female inmates and finished him off with more fatal blows. The suspect escaped by hammering an opening at the jail kitchen wall. He also took the victim's .45-cal. service firearm and wallet with an undetermined amount of money. The attack was discovered three hours later by a policeman who was about to turn over a newly arrested criminal.

Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Mom, son die in mishap

REINA MERCEDES, Isabela—A mother and her 11-year-old son were killed when their van hit a parked delivery van along the national highway in Barangay Tallungan here on Friday morning. Isabela police director Senior Supt. Percival Barba identified the victims as Henedina Veronica Pua, 42, and her son, Clifford Allan. Barba said the Puas' driver, who was unidentified in the reports, fled after the accident.

Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Surigao folk in mourning

BUTUAN CITY—Surigaonons are mourning the loss of former Sen. Robert "Bobby" Barbers who died on Christmas Day following a cardiac arrest. "We will surely miss him. He was a great leader of Surigao. No one in the history of Surigao City has ever surpassed his record of public service," said Surigao City Mayor Alfonso Casurra, a close ally of Barbers.

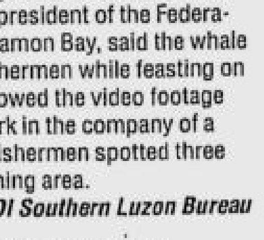
Ma. Kristina E. Cassion, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Army exec slain

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—Just as communist leaders spurned the four-day ceasefire offer of the national government this holiday season, suspected communist assassins gunned down a military official in front of a public market in Lian, Batangas on Dec. 23. Chief Supt. Jesus Verzosa, Calabarzon police director, identified the victim as Cpl. Domingo Bartolome, 44, a member of the Army's 59th Infantry Battalion. He said Bartolome was also the commanding officer of the Citizen's Armed Forces Geographical Unit in Barangay San Diego, Lian town. Verzosa said the victim was standing outside the public market in Barangay Dos at around 11 a.m. after buying food for his family's *noche buena* when a gunman shot him at close range. He said the victim died on the spot.

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Whale sharks in Quezon



LUCENA CITY—A group of Lamon Bay volunteer defenders based in Atimonan town celebrated the reappearance of whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*) in the seas fronting their place, calling it a testament to the success of their campaign to protect this part of the bay. About four weeks ago, a whale shark or "butanding" measuring about five meters long appeared near the five-hectare local government-declared marine area fronting the coastal village of Caridad Ilaya in Atimonan. Greg de Gracia, president of the Federation of Bantay Dagat in Lamon Bay, said the whale shark was spotted by fishermen while feasting on anchovies. De Gracia showed the video footage he took of the whale shark in the company of a diver. He said last year, fishermen spotted three whale sharks in their fishing area.

Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Manta ray zone sought

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna—The marine research arm of the Department of Science and Technology has proposed the setting up of a marine reserve area and protective buoy system along the Bontod-Tacdogan Reef off the waters of Sorsogon and Masbate provinces to protect the giant manta rays from extinction. The Philippine Council for Aquatic and Marine Research and Development said ecotourism in the Bontod-Tacdogan Reef poses a danger to the giant manta rays (*Manta birostris*). The agency said giant manta rays, locally known as "pasa-pasa," are susceptible to extinction because of overfishing and coral reef destruction.

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Zambo airport tagged 1 of RP's most dangerous

ZAMBOANGA CITY—DANGER LURKS at the Zamboanga International Airport (ZIA) because of potholes, some as deep as four inches, littering its runway system, officials said.

Celso Bayabos, director of the Air Transportation Office here, said the runway systems are deteriorating.

"There are many potholes, about 3 to 4 inches deep," Bayabos said.

He said for runway 27 alone, about 900 meters out of the 2.7 kilometer stretch needed immediate repair.

But airline officials said the entire runway system needs to be repaired and not just a portion of it.

"It's the entire runway that is deteriorating. The most critical is runway 27," Capt. Ismael Dalisim, Air Philippines' safety and security chief, said.

Dalisim said because of this, "our pilots are living on luck."

"We are giving credit to our pilots and their expertise in using ZIA (for the continued safety of passengers)," Dalisim said.

He said that in their assessment of airports in the country, Zamboanga City has the worst and the poorest runway followed by Iloilo Airport.

"Because aside from deteriorating runway, runway markings or taxi center lines are no longer clear especially at night time," Dalisim said.

He said the condition of the runway system here "might cause accident" if left unattended.

Dalisim said that the poor runway could cause damage to the aircraft's engine, which could trigger accidents.

"The engine sucks the air. Debris would be sucked and aircraft might be flying with one engine and that is very dangerous," he said.

Chito Atilano, branch manager of the Philippine Airlines here, said their pilots also made similar complaints.

Bayabos admitted that the potholes indeed pose danger to the safety of aircraft and passengers.

But he said they do not have enough funds for the maintenance and repair of the runway system.

"There was an allocation of P2 million in 2002, but we only received funds good for 100 pails of premix cold asphalt just recently," he said.

Each pail costs about P1,600 and they get the asphalt from Cebu City.

"So we just pick the most critical portion for repair and unfortunately only one fourth of the 900 meters were asphalted," Bayabos said.

He said they were asking the Department of Budget and Management for the immediate release of the fund so that repairs could immediately start.

"We just hope that no accident would happen before action is taken," Bayabos said.

He said that to make the airport safe, ATO personnel should conduct manual sweeping every hour to ensure that no pebbles litter the runway. *Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

E-mail: pr_provincial_news@inquirer.com.ph

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

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The message is forgiveness

By Gil Francis G. Arevalo
Legazpi City

ANTHONY BELLO'S FATHER, Pacquito, was killed on Dec. 27, 1970 by policemen tasked by a powerful politician then to hunt him down.

Only 5 years old then, Tony was filled with anger at his father's killers.

One of the suspects in the killing, Jun Buenaflor, was arrested and convicted sometime in 1972.

Though Buenaflor was imprisoned, Tony's anger was unappeasable.

The Bello killing by Buenaflor's group was a sensational story in the city and would not easily die down.

But only in August this year, Tony sent friends and people close to their families into disbelief when he married Marilette, Buenaflor's daughter.

Was it a ploy? Was it the realization of his revenge?

They could not understand. They could imagine the traumatic and tormented life Tony and his family had gone through since Pacquito died. A deep wound hardly heals.

Now in their 40s, Tony and Marilette can still recall how hard it was for them to grow up while overcoming all the memories: For Tony, seeing his father being brought to the morgue; for Marilette, his father being escorted by policemen to the New Bilibid Prison in Muntinlupa.

Marilette admitted that she was a papa's girl and all she did was cry a lot from the time her father was convicted. While for Tony, all he could think of through the years was how to exact revenge on his father's killers.

Urban legend

Days after the incident, Tony and his brother Luis were immediately brought by their mother to the United States to stay there for good.

But people back home who had known the Bellos believed that soon, the two brothers would return with the best-laid plans for revenge. Since 1972, it had become an urban legend, which even some policemen and politicians had feared would happen.

But unknown to many, the first time Tony came back to visit Legazpi, he and Marilette had seen each other secretly. That was 1976 and both of them were still in grade school.

Tony would confide his thoughts to Marilette, who listened to him with sisterly love and affection. Eventually, the two became close friends.

"Of course, the wound was still fresh that time, so no one would ever expect that the two of us were going together as if we were like brother and sister longing to share some thoughts and time together. We found out that we were the only two persons who could understand well each other's pains and problems," Marilette said. Strangely, she confided, during the times they were together that they seldom talked about their fathers.

"I don't know, but I was the only person who knew him well and the person that he could easily run to every time he had problems or if he felt that the world was against him. I didn't fear him nor felt that he was harmful though I could sense that he was still full of hatred," she shared.

Their closeness was unknown to their relatives, as tension still existed between their families.

Dark days

Marilette continued to pray that someday her father would be set free. She and her family constantly visited Buenaflor in Muntinlupa. Back in America, Tony found it hard to cope with homesickness and the hatred that he still harbored towards the killers of his father.

Tony recalled how his life went astray. His only way to escape or forget everything was through drugs, alcohol, women and living like hell. He was imprisoned in California. He even became homeless there from the time his life became meaningless and was cynical about everything.

"I became obsessed with revenge. But from the time I went out of jail I learned a very important lesson that changed my life: love your enemies. It is through forgiving that I could let go of all the pains and hatred I have inside," Tony said.

But Tony and Marilette continued to communicate with each other, which had kept Tony hopeful.

First encounter

On Dec. 29, 1994, 22 years after serving his sentence at Bilibid prison, Buenaflor was released from jail when he was granted a pardon during President Fidel Ramos' time.

Marilette was happy. She thought it was time for Tony to see her father. But she could feel Tony's animosity when he learned about her father's freedom.

Sometime in 1995, the moment came. Tony arrived from California and decided to meet Marilette's father.

Marilette said she was so worried about Tony since she could see the anger in his face.

"I told him: 'please, if you're planning to hurt my father don't do it. He's here waiting for you, and wants to talk to you about everything. It's time to heal the wounds. It's time to talk about it openly.' I thanked God when he really calmed down," Marilette said.

And to her surprise, her father and Tony ended up crying and embracing each other.

"It's time to forget the past. I've been convicted and have served my term and I swear to God that even when I was in jail I continued to pray for the soul of Pacquito," Buenaflor, now 67, said.

During his early years in prison, several directors and producers wanted to make a film about his life. But he refused, for he wanted a peaceful life even inside the prison.

After the first encounter, Tony continued to visit Marilette and his father, until he decided to go back to California to work there as an iron-worker in a certain company.

Marilette finished her law course and worked as secretary at the Mayor's Office.

Love actually

Marilette learned that Tony was going to marry and would settle for good in America. She herself got involved with a man and their brief relationship produced a son, Kieffer, who is now 6 years old.

After a failed marriage, Tony filed a divorce.

Last year, Tony came back to Legazpi, this time to see to it that she could tell Marilette of his intention to marry her. Marilette realized that she, too, was in love with Tony.

They married last August 22 in a simple ceremony.

"Whatever people may think about our marriage, all we can say is that we love each other so much. And it's really about love and forgiveness not hate, vengeance, or counter-violence that perhaps most of them expected to happen since it involved our fathers. In many ways, it was very painful for us because we're both victims of circumstances from the time we grew up to these moments," Tony said.

And as he looked forward to New Year, he said revenge was a thing of the past.

"Everything is history now. What I have now are love and forgiveness," Tony said.

And for Buenaflor, "I know what is in his heart, he really loves my daughter and I'm not against it. I know he's sincere about it and my daughter loves him, too."

REPUBLIKA NG PILIPINAS
KAGAWARAN NG PANANALAPI
KAWANIHAN NG RENTAS INTERNAS
Agham Road, Diliman, Quezon City

December 23, 2005

REVENUE MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 74-2005

SUBJECT : Deadline for Availment of Enhanced Voluntary Assessment Program (EVAP) for Taxable Year 2004 and Prior Years Under Certain Conditions

To : All Revenue Officers and Others Concerned

The Enhanced Voluntary Assessment Program (EVAP) for Taxable Year 2004 and Prior Years Under Certain Conditions pursuant to the provisions of Revenue Regulations No. 18-2005 is valid until December 30, 2005. However, said date is a legal holiday. Thus, taxpayers can still avail thereof up to the first working day of January 2006.

All concerned are hereby enjoined to strictly implement this Circular.

(Sgd.) **JOSE MARIO C. BUÑAG**
Commissioner of Internal Revenue

(PDI - Dec 29 2005)

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Center gives hope to poor stroke victims, malnourished villagers

A PATIENT goes through a range of motion exercises and stretching therapy at the Physical Therapy Rehabilitation and Nutrition Center in Ligao City. NIÑO JESUS Y. ORBETA

By Michael B. Jaucian
Ligao City

AFTER 63-YEAR-OLD VALERIANO Pobre suffered a hemorrhagic stroke, he underwent free treatment at the Physical Therapy Rehabilitation and Nutrition Center in Ligao City in Albay for about two months. Now, he has regained his good health.

The center in Barangay Tuburan was built two years ago by the city government at a cost of P500,000, with the help of the party-list group Bayan Muna. It helps poor persons with disabilities, especially victims of stroke and cerebral palsy, and serious malnutrition.

Alfredo Aguilar, head of the center, said stroke and cerebral palsy patients from far-flung villages had been helpless because they did not have the time and money to travel to the Bicol Regional Training and Teaching Hospital in Legazpi City, a 30-minute ride from the Ligao city proper, which has a physical therapy department.

Now, the center has given new life and hope to hundreds of stroke victims and malnourished children.

Mayor Linda Gonzalez said 438 indigent patients from Ligao and neighboring towns have recovered from their ailments. At least eight children have been rescued from third-degree malnutrition, she added.

The center started operations in September 2003. It is equipped with standard physical therapy equipment and employs four skilled workers.

Serving the public for free, it operates with an annual budget of P1.1 million from the city government's Gender and Development Fund: P500,00 for the rehabilitation function and P600,000 for nutrition. The amount excludes the salaries of the personnel.

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT
NATIONAL CAPITAL JUDICIAL REGION
BRANCH 90, QUEZON CITY

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION FOR
REHABILITATION WITH PRAYER FOR
SUSPENSION OF PAYMENTS AND
ACTIONS AGAINST PETITIONER.

SPECIAL PROC. NO. [illegible]

PHESCHEM INDUSTRIAL CORPORATION,
Petitioner.

STAY ORDER

Before this Court is a verified Petition for corporate rehabilitation with prayer for a Stay Order filed by the above-named petitioner.

Briefly, the petitioner alleges that despite the fact that it has total assets of PhP 255,089,832.09 it has encountered severe cash flow problems which prevent it from paying matured and maturing debts and other past due obligations. The proposed rehabilitation plan calls for the payment of PhP 175,000,000.00 as principal and interest payments to creditors within eight years or earlier. Consequently, the petitioner prays for the issuance of a Stay Order pending proceedings before this Court.

A careful examination of the Petition shows that the same conforms substantially with Section 2, Rule 4 of the Interim Rules of Procedure on Corporate Rehabilitation (see also Supreme Court Resolution en banc in A.M. No. 00-8-10-SC). This Court therefore finds the Petition to be sufficient in form and substance.

IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, this Court issues a Stay Order, in accordance with Section 6, Rule 4 of the aforecited Interim Rules as follows:

1.) Appointing Atty Norma T. [illegible] who is also a Certified Public Accountant, as rehabilitation receiver who shall be considered as an officer of the court and who shall have the powers, duties and functions as provided in Section 14, Rule 4 of the aforecited Interim Rules. The rehabilitation receiver must post a bond of PhP 500,000.00 before entering upon her powers, duties and functions and must take an oath as provided under Section 15, Rule 4 of the aforecited Interim Rules. The petitioner is directed to serve immediately a copy of this Stay Order upon the rehabilitation receiver Atty Norma T. [illegible] who shall manifest her acceptance or non-acceptance of her appointment not later than five (5) days from her receipt hereof.

2.) Staying enforcement of all claims, whether for money or otherwise and whether such enforcement is by court action or otherwise, against the petitioner, and its guarantors and sureties not solidarily liable with the petitioner including the staying of proceedings of collection cases filed against petitioner, and the staying of the enforcement/implementation of applications for extra-judicial foreclosure sales and actual foreclosure sales, if any, against the real and personal properties of the petitioner.

3.) Prohibiting the petitioner from selling, encumbering, transferring, or disposing in any manner any of its properties except in the ordinary course of business.

4.) Prohibiting the petitioner from making any payment of its liabilities outstanding as of the date of the filing of the petition on November 10, 2005.

5.) Prohibiting the suppliers of the petitioner from withholding supply of goods and services in the ordinary course of business for as long as the petitioner makes payments for the services and goods supplied after the issuance of this Stay Order.

6.) Directing the petitioner to pay in full all administrative expenses incurred after the issuance of this Stay Order.

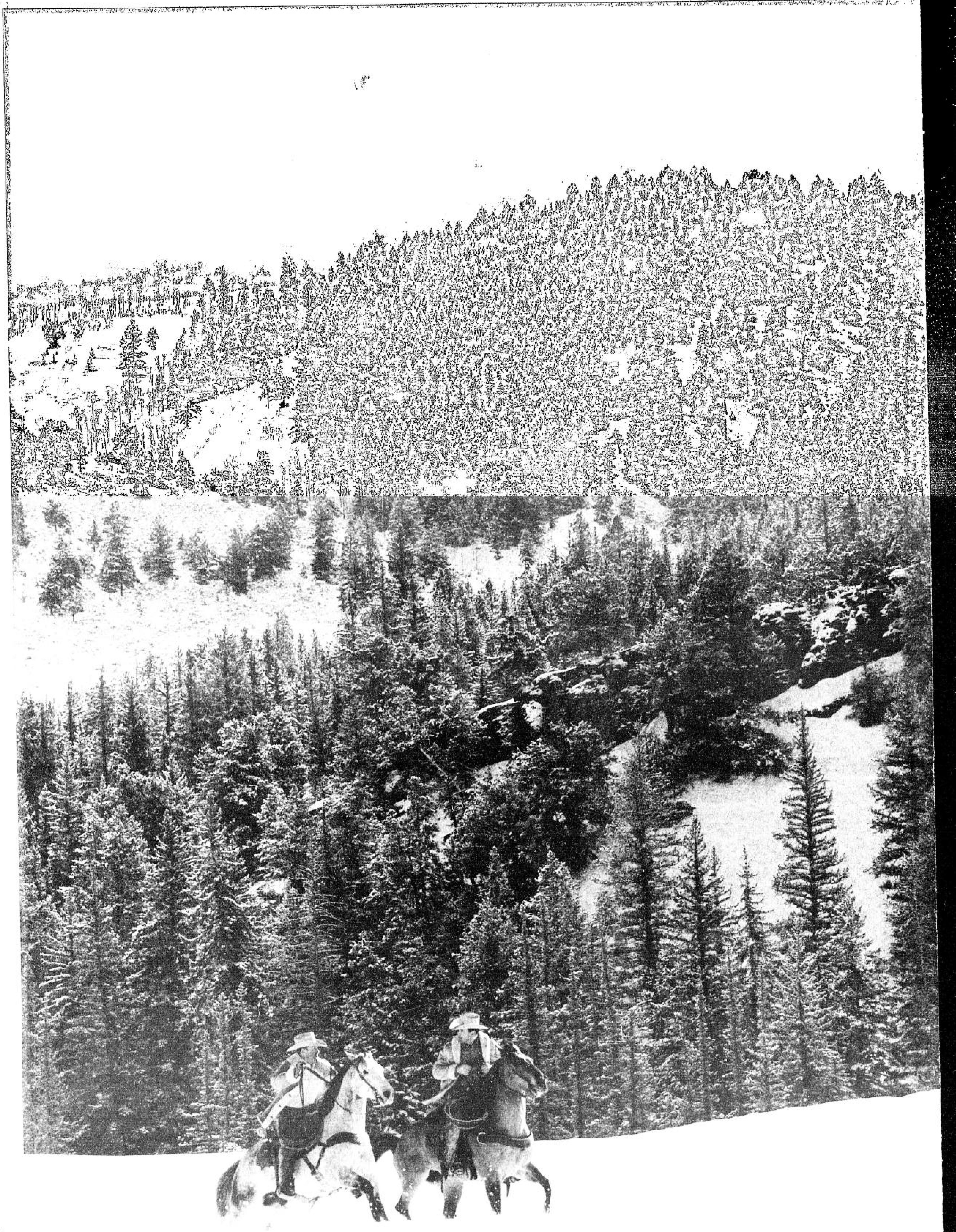
The initial hearing on the Petition is set on January 19, 2006 (Thursday) at 2:00 P.M. at the session room of Branch 90 of this Court located at the Ground Floor of the Hall of Justice Building, Quezon City Hall complex, Quezon City. In the event the initial hearing does not push through for any reason like there is no work on said date, the hearing shall be reset to January 24, 2006 (Tuesday) at 2:00 P.M. All creditors and all interested parties including the Securities and Exchange Commission are directed to file with this Court and serve upon the petitioner a verified comment on or opposition to the Petition, with supporting affidavits and documents, not later than ten (10) days before the date of the initial hearing as set forth above, and they are put on notice that their failure to do so will bar them from participating in the proceedings before this Court. All creditors and all interested parties are further directed to secure from this Court copies of the Petition and its annexes within such time as to enable them to file their verified comment on or opposition thereto and to prepare them for the initial hearing and to attain this purpose, the petitioner is ordered to file with this Court initially ten (10) additional copies of the Petition and its annexes within ten (10) days from receipt hereof.

The petitioner is furthermore directed by this Court to have a copy of this Order published in the business section of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, The Philippine Star, and one other newspaper of general circulation in the Philippines chosen by raffle if it is a newspaper other than the herein-named newspaper, considering the probable presence of creditors and interested parties not only in Luzon but also in the Visayas, once a week for two (2) consecutive weeks, with the last publication effected at least three (3) weeks prior to the date of initial hearing as set forth above, at the expense of the petitioner.

Ms Sylvia Joy D. [illegible], OIC, Branch Clerk of Court, is ordered to see to it that the Process Server shall serve immediately copies of this Stay Order upon: 1) Mr. Tomas Y. Tan (the president and duly authorized representative of the petitioner), c/o Pheschem Industrial Corporation, No. 491 Quezon Avenue, Quezon City; 2) Attys. [illegible] T. Garcia and [illegible] L. [illegible] (counsel for the petitioner), 102 [illegible] Bldg., 1318 Quezon Avenue, Quezon City; 3) Atty Norma T. [illegible] (the rehabilitation receiver), No. 9 San Agustin Street, [illegible] Complex 1, San Pedro, Laguna; and 4) the Honorable Chairman, Securities and Exchange Commission, EDSA (Epifanio De Los Santos Avenue), Mandaluyong City.

SO ORDERED.
Quezon City, November 18, 2005.

REYNALDO B. DAWAY, C.P.A.
Presiding Judge



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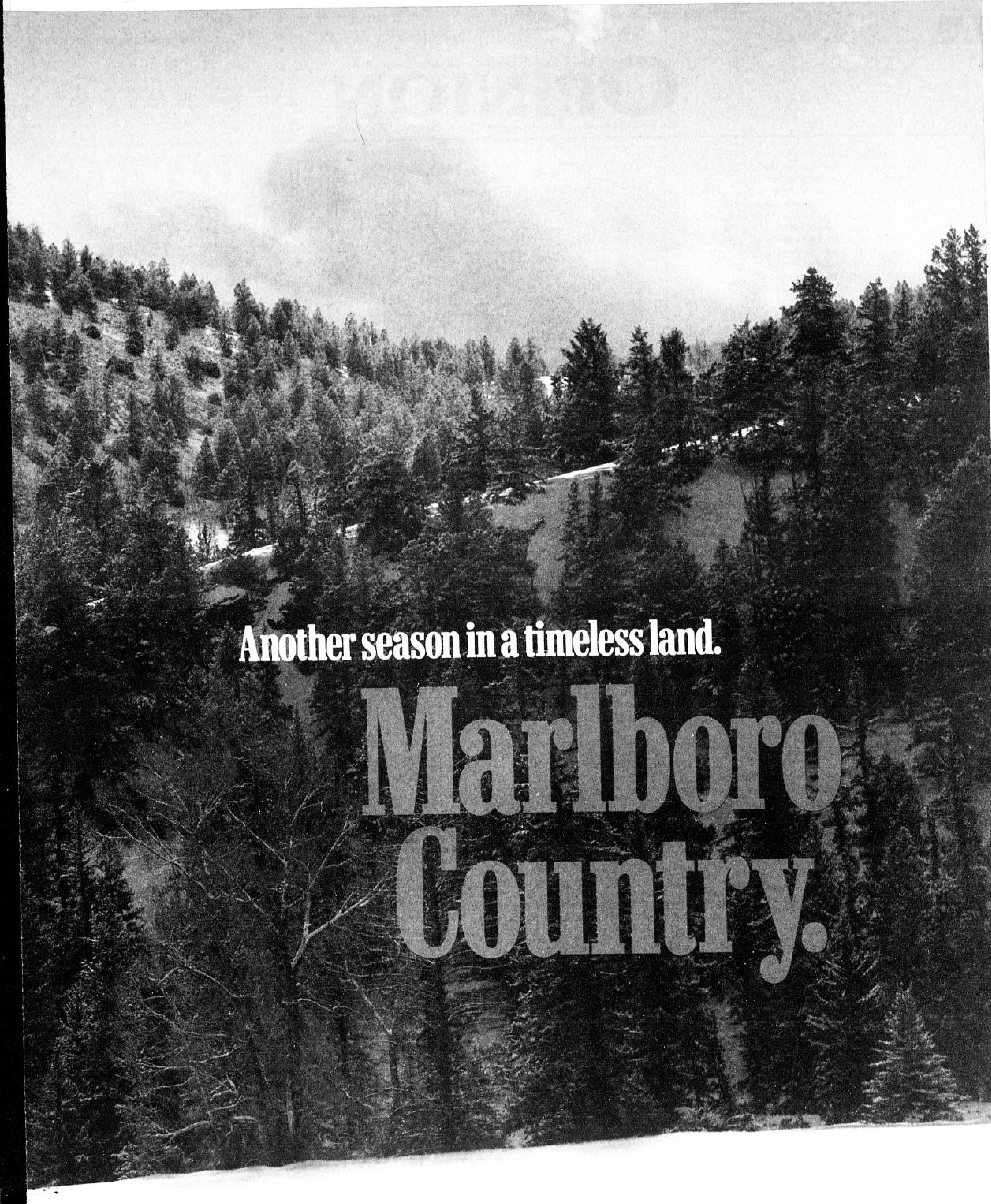
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OPINION

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Selfish scheme

EDITORIAL

ALL BUT LOST IN THE RUSH TO CELEBRATE Christmas were the fierce objections raised by prominent leaders of President Macapagal-Arroyo's own party against the proposal to cancel the 2007 elections as part of the transition to a parliamentary system of government. Former President Fidel V. Ramos, speaking in a televised interview last week, described the proposal as a "monumental blunder" and warned that unless the President disavowed the proposal before the year ends, he would withdraw his support from her administration. Speaker Jose de Venecia also rejected the no-election proposal, saying that as a matter of principle, lawmakers should "not benefit from their actions."

Ramos was, of course, quick to explain that he was not giving Ms Arroyo a deadline or ultimatum. But how else is anyone supposed to interpret such a very clearly worded threat?

Still with only a few days left before the deadline expires, Malacañang officials are saying the President would keep her thoughts on the issue to herself. Instead, Presidential Political Adviser Gabriel Claudio has offered to bring the issue for discussion and debate before a special meeting of the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats next month. He has dismissed the Ramos outburst as nothing more than just a part of a healthy democratic debate in the majority party.

But does Malacañang really think it can placate Ramos by giving him another forum to explain himself? Or is it willing to risk alienating, if not antagonizing, Ramos or De Venecia, or both of them at the same time, by ignoring their protests?

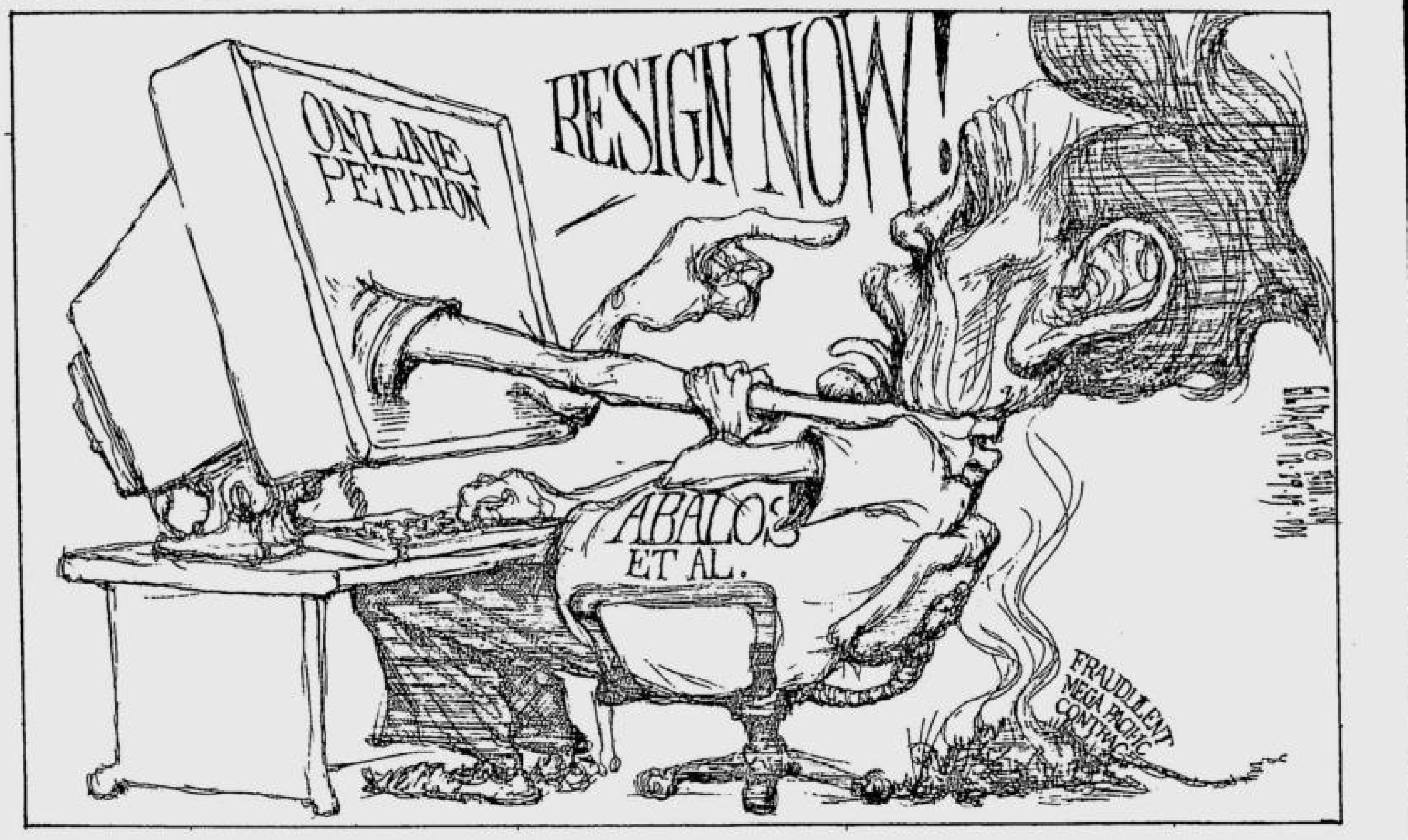
The administration could be committing another "monumental blunder" if the administration dismissed Ramos as just another ill-advised, old soldier, like retired Gen. Fortunato Abat, who ought to simply fade away. Ramos was a key player in both the Edsa I and Edsa II uprisings. He and De Venecia have been credited by many observers with propping up the Arroyo administration on July 8, when it was tottering from the defections of several Cabinet officials and key allies, like Senate President Franklin Drilon and former President Corazon Aquino. If Ramos and De Venecia were to join forces with Aquino and Drilon, let alone the original opposition, the least the administration can expect is more of the political turbulence and uncertainty that rocked the nation in 2005.

The irony of this developing rift in the administration party is that everyone involved agrees on the need to change the Constitution and the major reforms that have to be introduced, including the system of government and some of its economic provisions. Long before Ms Arroyo made Charter change one of the planks of her program of government, indeed probably before she even thought she would become president, Ramos and De Venecia were already pushing for a shift from the presidential to a parliamentary system of government. Where they differ is how to effect the transition from the old to the new system and when.

It's no secret that Ramos wants Ms Arroyo to end her term in 2007 when local elections are scheduled to be held. He said so in July, explaining that this would give the President a graceful exit amid serious questions about the legitimacy of her presidency and end the political division and bickering resulting from it. But with the Consultative Commission, whose members she had appointed, recommending the cancellation of the elections, suspicions have arisen that she is maneuvering to hang on and, indeed, to strengthen her hold on the highest office.

For Ramos and others who consider Charter change as a key to breaking the politics of gridlock that has hampered the country's development, such a self-serving agenda is bound to spell doom for their grand enterprise. The same suspicions about sinister political motives stopped the move to amend the Constitution during the Ramos presidency. There is no reason to believe that such a transparent attempt to extend the terms of almost all local and national officials will win public approval this time around.

Unless the administration drops this selfish scheme of canceling the 2007 elections, it might as well drop the whole idea of changing the Constitution. Calling off the elections may be an irresistible prospect to incumbent officials, but voters are unlikely to welcome the idea of giving up their right to choose their officials, even for this one time alone.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Grey hair

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"WE DARED TO THINK… THAT (HE'D) LIVE TO comb gray hair. But like his father, he had every gift but length of years."

The Irish poet William Butler Yeats crafted that poignant line on combing grey hair. And Sen. Edward Kennedy wove it into his family response at the funeral mass for the 38-year-old son of murdered US president John F. Kennedy. Off fog-bound Martha's Vineyard, a plane crashed and snuffed the lives of John Jr. and his wife, Carolyn Bessette. This young publisher dodged the life of scandals that dogged his famous relatives. Twice, he flunked the bar—before becoming a New York prosecutor who won convictions for every case he handled. He took the bus to work, spent time for charities and refused to exploit his illustrious credentials.

If anybody could resurrect his parent's "Camelot," this was the man, some thought. "There's too much nonsense about the Kennedy mystique," historian Theodore Sorensen wrote. Nonetheless, most assumed John Jr. would "comb grey hair."

Isn't that also a deeply held wish of most Filipinos? Will life become better next year? ordinary folk ask as 2005 peters out. Will more of us live to "comb grey hair" in 2006?

But it's one dream that has been painfully trashed. Malgovernance by the regime, a discredited opposition and a grasping elite strip people of their few gifts and deny many the hoped-for "length of years."

"No indicator captures the divergence in human development opportunity more powerfully than infant mortality," asserts the United Nation's "Human Development Report 2005."

(Infant mortality among Afro-Americans in the United States, "the world's richest country," matches that of struggling Cuba, a BBC Christmas Day report reveals. But that's for another column.)

Here, out of every 1,000 kids born, 36 never make it to their fifth birthday. In next door Malaysia, the under-five mortality rate is seven. In this "ovarian lottery," many never get to comb grey hair.

Singaporeans live, on the average, to 78 years, HDR life expectancy tables show. And the Japanese can look forward to 82. Skipping wide differences in provinces, Filipinos now have a life expectancy of 70.2. years—up from the low 60s half a century ago.

That's not to be sneezed at. "I urge you on this—which I think is wisdom—that if you find you can't make seventy, don't you go," Mark Twain joked at his 70th birthday bash in 1905.

Consider "Progress in Survival," one of Philippine Human Development Report 2005's newer indicators. It factors in the impact of nutrition, health services, education, etc. What emerges is a yardstick for gauging: "Probability At Birth Of Not Surviving to Age 40."

"Life begins at 40." Admittedly, that's an arbitrary threshold. But what results if we compare the chances of crossing this benchmark in our 79 provinces? (It would be 86 provinces if gerrymandering congressmen fragmented existing provinces into smaller weaker units.)

Jarring disparities emerge. Those born in urbanized areas, with better health facilities, more schools and industrial jobs, etc., have the edge.

In Metro Manila, 9 percent may not live to age 40. That's a percentage point lower than for people in Pampanga and Bulacan. Those in Rizal, Cavite, Cebu and Nueva Ecija log in at 11 percent; while in Laguna, La Union, Tarlac and Bataan, it's 12 percent. In Iloilo, Pangansinan and Misamis Oriental, it's 13 percent.

But premature graves are more likely for "people of the short straw for whom it is almost too late." These people live in provinces, They're short of cash, services, infrastructure, (and competent governance, some critics say). Bias and armed conflict often rack their provinces.

For those born within the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, their chances to "comb grey hair" are far slimmer. That's true also of those wedged in the periphery of centralized tax, services and health resources.

Out of every 100 babies born in Tawi-Tawi and Sulu, 29 are not likely to cross the magic 40-year-old threshold. It is 24 in Maguindano and 23 in Lanao del Sur; and a lower 18 in Basilan, 16 in Sultan Kudarat and 15 in Sarangani.

A number of non-Muslim provinces are similarly burdened. The three Samars—north, east and west—are strapped into the 20-plus category.

Others must call out burial squads oftener: 19 percent in Agusan and Surigao de Sur; 18 percent in Biliran, Camarines Norte and Palawan, and 17 percent in Aklan, Catanduanes and Romblon.

Cagayan, Occidental Mindoro and Misamis have 16 percent of truncated lives. It is 15 percent in Siquijor, Guimaras, Surigao del Norte, Leyte, Southern Leyte, and in the "Oriental" divisions of Negros, Mindoro and Davao.

These shortened lives and early deaths can be avoided. But only if our "leaders" budge beyond Abat-like charades and Garcillano-Ong farces. Business as usual is not an option, if more are to "comb grey hair."

Governors and the governed need to focus on the essentials: reducing child mortality and improving maternal health; pruning poverty levels by half; reducing school dropouts and ensuring full enrollments; widening sharply the access to clean water and shelter for slum dwellers; curbing ecological plunder.

They call these the "Millennium Development Goals," adopted in 2000 by the Philippines and by over 180 other countries. But that's just fancy diplomatic language for decency in governance: compassion for the vulnerable and an insight that social justice is the only basis for a humane society.

Indeed, "grey hair does not reveal the age of the heart."

***

(E-mail : juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph)

A century thence

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THE USUAL TACK DURING RIZAL DAY IS FOR speakers to say something about the relevance of Rizal today. That has been so for as long as I can remember. Well, they are not going to have a hard time finding Rizal's relevance today. It's that Rizal might very well be speaking directly to us from across the divide of time and space. It's that we might as well be living in his time and place. The parallels are sublime.

Rizal lived in a colony ruled from afar by a power that had become less and less interested in it, that clung to it as an outpost of a tottering empire. Spain toward the close of the 19th century was wracked by bitter fighting between liberals and conservatives, a thing that impacted on the colony in terms of a dizzying succession of alternately benign and brutal governor-generals. In the end, of course, that fighting would lead to the Civil War of the 1930s and to the victory of the fascists, led by Generalisimo Francisco Franco.

We live in a colony—did you really believe we have gotten independent?—ruled nominally by a power that had become less and less interested in it, that clings to it tenaciously as a military springboard for keeping a restive Asia in check. It is a tottering empire wracked by bitter fighting between fascists and liberals—yes, fascists, whom you'd know from the fact that Jimmy Carter, no great radical, has become the scourge of the Right—with the liberals gaining ground one day and the fascists the next. Who will win that war? It's not only Iraq that waits with bated breath.

Rizal lived in a time of a corrupt "frailocracy," the rule of the friars, which was a far more effective and ruthless rule than the one wielded by the secular authorities. The friars didn't just rule heart and mind, they ruled body and soul: They were a secular power apart from being a religious one. And they were well entrenched. The governor-generals served for only a few years, the friars served (themselves) forever. It was not uncommon for the civil authority to clash with the religious one, often with much bloodshed. The usual way to augment the friars' bounties on earth was to threaten rich landowners on their deathbeds with hellfire in the afterlife unless they parted with their lands in this life.

We live in a time if not of a corrupt frailocracy, at least, of the corrupt collaborationist kind. Though the power of the Catholic Church has waned, it continues to have enough clout to prop up illegitimate and corrupt leaders. In lieu of religious orders fighting for spoils, they have factions fighting for spoils. Tyrants may come and go, the friars will be there forever. It is not uncommon for the civil authorities to clash with religious ones, the bloodshed being happily (or unhappily, depending on how you look at it) metaphorical. The clergy itself is rived into progressive and backward, the backward elements having had the upper hand over the last few years. The usual way for bishops to augment their bounties on earth rather than in heaven is to get money from Pagcor. Their reason being that they need it to give to the poor. They regard themselves as poor.

Rizal lived under a largely tyrannical regime, the periods of benignity being overshadowed by periods of suppression. To move to oust that rule was to court death. To argue the illegitimacy of that rule and entertain freedom was to court death. To posit the existence of a truth beyond what the religious and secular authorities said it was was to court death. Rizal did the last two—he was merely suspected of doing the first, but he met death anyway.

We live under a tyrannical regime, the periods of benignity being overshadowed by periods of suppression. To move to oust that rule is to court water-cannoning. To argue the illegitimacy of that rule and entertain freedom is to court dismissal for government officials and court martial for military ones. To posit the existence of a truth beyond what Malacañang says it is is to court, well, I would not put it past the current occupant to raise the bar on the forms of reprisal. The surveys say the citizens have done the last two—for some reason they have not taken to the streets to act on their convictions, but have met, if not death, at least with *dedma*.

Rizal fought all this with the force of his wit and talent, writing, enlightening, curing the physically and spiritually sick. His satirical barbs particularly against the friars earned for him their everlasting enmity, which led to a lonely exile in Dapitan and a cruel death in Bagumbayan. Had he lived today, he might have been called negativistic, depicting Spanish rule in all its rot and infamy. He believed deeply in the worth of the *indio*, refuting—not least by his own example—all accusations that he was innately lazy and feeble-minded. He took pride in his country, and showed the best it could be, the equal of any country in the world.

We do not lack for Rizals today, fighting the rot and infamy that blanket the land like fog, risking lonely exiles and even death (literal in the case of the provincial journalists), keeping faith that the Filipino is not lazy and feeble-minded and that he can rise to a better fate than becoming a world-class nurse. But it is no small irony that more than a century after Rizal wrote "The Philippines: A Century Hence" (1889), attempting to glimpse the shape of things to come, we should only find the Philippines thrown back to more of "a century thence," relapsing to the state of things that were.

Well, Rizal himself said it best: People who do not know where they come from will never know where they are going.

Best tribute to Bobby Barbers

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

NO LESS THAN BRITISH AMBASSADOR PETER Beckingham has raised the alarm about the exodus of our doctors to Britain. In this era where doctors don't seem to think anything about migrating to greener pastures in their new role as nurses, we, at the Alay sa Kawal (ASK) Foundation, are proud of the fact that ASK is enlisting medical students, under a full scholarship program, to serve the men in uniform.

ASK's "Doktor Para sa Kawal Scholarship Program," launched in May 2001 with a seed money of P5 million from President Macapagal-Arroyo, has 10 medical scholars now. Three of them have already graduated, and two passed the board exams last August. One is now an intern at the AFP Medical Center on V. Luna Road, Quezon City. We also now have scholars at the UE-RM Medical Center, Our Lady of Fatima Medical School and the Mindanao State University. The new doctors will be immediately commissioned to the AFP as captains and will serve the AFP for a minimum of five years.

* * *

ASK's scholarship program was received eagerly by the leading medical schools. Many sought admission but, due to limited funds, we were constrained to start with only six scholars. But program directress and ASK treasurer Dr. Roberta Carreon-Romero, a UP and US-trained doctor, recently sought an additional P5 million from Malacañang, and we're hopeful about it. This new funding would enable ASK to expand its scholarship to cover the scholars' requests for such things as funds for board and lodging during board review. The ASK board, led by its chair, RP Ambassador to London Edgardo Espiritu, and its president, lawyer Ramon Pedrosa, wants more scholars to come from Mindanao and train at MSU, as much of the field work would be in that big island.

At a time when other doctors are looking at more profitable horizons, ASK's medical scholars look forward to serving in remote areas and battlefield zones. Orchids to them.

* * *

This Christmas season, as we commemorate the birth of Christ, we also take time to remember friends and acquaintances who have gone to the Great Beyond. Thus, we remember and pray for Sonny Siytangco, Capt. Rene Jarque, the late NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco and former Sen. Robert Barbers. Sonny Siytangco was known in our media circle as the ever-smiling, gentlemanly and amiable husband of Bulletin columnist Deedee Siytangco.

* * *

Of all the good things being said about Sen. Barbers, I remember best how he courageously tried, all by himself, to force the Senate to bring out the report of the three committees that investigated their colleague, Sen. Panfilo Lacson, on his and his PAOCTF men's alleged drug-trafficking. Barbers' efforts, however, proved inutile. The report would have called for the indictment of Lacson and his men. I followed that issue closely in the Senate and I thought that ex-cop Barbers was a real macho in pressing the issue.

This Tuesday, the Senate will pay him tribute in a necrological service, but the best tribute would have been to bring a closure to the drug-trafficking issue against Lacson and his men by making public that committee report.

* * *

Another one who has gone on to the Lord was Vicky Bunye, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye's sister and my contemporary in UP. She had lived in Hawaii for some time when she decided to return to Manila out of love for country and sibling. A good friend in Hawaii, my *tocaya* Belinda "Lindy" Aquino, a political science and Asian Studies professor at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and regular contributor to the INQUIRER, paid a generous tribute to Vicky, which she emailed to me.

"Vicky decided to return to Manila largely to help out her brother Toting in his political career (from mayor to congressman and now press secretary). From an international migration perspective, her case is interesting because it goes against the trend. Most professionals don't elect to (go) back there to retire because they have developed a certain lifestyle that would be difficult to sustain in a Third World country. Some do come back, but they cannot adjust anymore—to the heat, pollution, traffic, etc. I know so many people who can't seem to make up their mind where to retire.

"But Vicky was a different breed. After serving in various capacities in Honolulu, mainly as an executive in the City and County—she was director of the Office of Human Resources, which was a Cabinet position under Mayor Frank Fasi, director of a YWCA office, trainer for the Peace Corps in San Jose and Kohala on the big island of Hawaii, etc.—she decided to (go) home and work there. Speaking of love of country. She was very popular in Hawaii and an excellent role model for the Fil-Am community.

"In addition to being an adviser to Toting, Vicky gave a lot of lectures on her experiences in Hawaii in such institutions as the Development Academy of the Philippines. I think that shortly before her death, she collapsed in the middle of a lecture. *Sayang*. Vicky was extremely funny and a delightful character, so full of life. She was always telling all those jokes that were not distasteful or politically incorrect. One time, I told her she could have succeeded in the movies as a stand-up comic. She said her family was already in the movies. I only came to know later that Mila del Sol, who was such a vibrant actress and also a comic, was her auntie (I think she's still alive and living in Las Vegas). Another aunt, Guia Imperial, who died early, was a starlet.

"Vicky really led an exemplary, proactive life on both sides of the ocean. And it's such a loss. Reminds me of Haydee Yorac, who died before her time. It seems we're losing all these good UP people."

Christmas letters from Muslims

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

PEACE, KAPAYAPAAN, KALINAW, KALINONG, Kasanyangan (Tausug), Kalilintad (Maguindanao), Kalinong (Hiligaynon), Salam, Shalom, to you this Christmas.

I was pleasantly surprised to receive letters from Muslims working in Saudi Arabia reacting positively to last week's column piece, "The Christmas Story in the Koran."

First, I'd like to say that the INQUIRER stylebook spells the name of the Muslims' Holy Book as "Koran" so the few times in the past that I wrote "Qur'an" I always got a call from the proofreading department informing me that the spelling will be changed. I again got a call regarding my title.

At first I was a bit hesitant to run the account on Mary's pregnancy and the events that led to Jesus' birth as narrated in the Koran. Was my copy of the Koran an accepted translation? I presumed that like the Bible that comes in different translations, the Koran also has many translations. My pocket-size copy is by Ballantine Books, a division of Random House and published in the United States. Its title is "The Koran." I got it from Powerbooks for only P125.75. The Bible isn't as cheap.

Honestly, I was charmed by the account of Mary giving birth beside the trunk of a date palm. Famished and in pain, Mary heard a voice telling her to shake the tree, whereupon ripe dates fell on her. Dates are a good post-partum repast, I suppose. I thought, we have always associated Christmas with *castañas* (chestnuts). Why don't we switch to dates?

I really prefer dates. Some of the best I've tasted were preserved ones that were still on the twig. They came from Tunisia. Dates, I was told, are a popular food item for Muslims at the end of Ramadan.

Now, if we go by the ripening of the dates and their falling on Mary, this would mean that Jesus was not born during a winter month but in the summer in that part of the world. Not that the exact date and time matters much now.

Anyway, here are some of the letters.

"I was, as usual, going over the columns and to my surprise, I found your story title to be quite intriguing. However, as I read the story, I was happy to know that even if our times have changed, good people are still not hard to find. Thanks for taking time out to read our Holy Qur'an (correct name) and I am grateful that you have published the story of our beloved Prophet Jesus (or Issa in Arabic). (Peace and blessings be upon him.) Keep up the good work. —alepa@Kfshrc@edu.sa"

* * *

"Thank you for your nice article about Virgin Mary and Jesus as mentioned in the Qur'an. Yes indeed, as Muslim reverts we believe in them as well as all the prophets sent by Allah or God. Prophets sent by Allah to teach people to worship only one true God and their greeting is 'Salam' (peace). Jesus was sent to Bani Israel and said: 'Hear Israel, your God and my God is one, so worship Him only.' Also Issa (Jesus) said: 'And verily Allah is my Lord and your Lord. So worship Him (alone).'

"That is the Straight Path—Allah's religion of Islamic Monotheism which He did ordain for all of His Prophets. [Ayah 36, Surah 19 (Maryam), the Glorious Qur'an.]

"But (Jesus') birthday is not celebrated by practicing (Sunni) Muslims. When Mary gave birth, fresh ripe dates dropped when she shook the trunk of the palm tree. Here in the Middle East, dates ripen during summer (July-August) and not December.

"Reading the Qur'an and learning Islam is really a good sign for all of us Filipinos in order to bring lasting peace and progress in our country. Peace be unto you.—Ben Manikan, Riyadh, KSA, afiainc1423@yahoo.com"

* * *

"Salam! That is how we greet each other in Islam. Peace! And I would like to extend it to you. For me, you are lucky to have the chance to have taken a glimpse of the Qur'an and I hope this won't be the last time. Please read it to feed your mind and to nourish your soul. Don't be afraid that you will end up comparing the Bible and the Qur'an. Happy Holidays!—Mary-Ann Amir, RN, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia"

* * *

I also received a letter from a friend and church activist from way back, now Midsayap-based Pastor Al Senturias, chair of the Mindanao People's Peace Movement (MPPM). Al and his wife Linda (president of the Southern Christian College) are both involved in forging peace among Christians and Muslims.

Attached with the letter was the "Summary Report and Recommendations of the Mindanao People's Peace Mission to Sulu" (conducted before Christmas).

Among the 13 observations are:

1. The people complain of looting done by the military during operations and being fired at by helicopter gunships.
2. There are American troops in Sulu engaged in *bayanihan* or civic works. However, the people are not aware of the real purpose of the Americans' presence.
3. There is suspicion on the part of the military leadership regarding the motivations of concerned citizens, just as there is deepening mistrust among civilians of the military presence.
4. There is a strong citizens' movement capable of working with local government units, the police and the military in building a peaceful, orderly and progressive community.

Even longer are the recommendations classified as short-term (one year), medium-term (two to three years) and long-term (four to seven years). The long-term has to do with addressing the root of the conflict in Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan as well as other Bangsamoro areas in Mindanao and Palawan. This is about the right to self-determination of the Bangsamoro.

There is so much more to this MPPM report than I am able to mention and which government, civil society and churches ought to pay attention to. There is reason to hope for peace, if only….

Send feedback to cerespd@info.com.ph

Rizal's pending question

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

HERE'S AN EXTRACT TAKEN FROM LUIS Serrano's translation (from Tagalog) of the "controversial" memoirs of Dr. Pio Valenzuela, recounting the conversation he had, as emissary of the Katipunan, with Rizal on June 21, 1896, in Dapitan. Valenzuela's memoirs conflict with the testimony he gave on Oct. 6, 1896 when he was captured by the Spaniards, in which he said Rizal vehemently refused to have anything to do with the Katipunan or a revolution. But his memoirs and the testimony he gave in court in 1917 (after the Spanish era) showed that Rizal really favored a revolution but not just yet. Some historians explain the discrepancy as Valenzuela's attempt to not implicate Rizal after his capture. The Rizal in Valenzuela's memoirs is the Rizal I admire.

Rizal: You have to use all precautions to prevent the discovery of the association.

Valenzuela: And if the precautions fail?

R: You, the principal chiefs, must see that the resolutions of the Katipunan are faithfully complied with; you are duty-bound to avail yourselves of all means to prevent the shedding of blood. When the generals do not command, the soldiers stay still.

V: The case of the Katipunan is different; if the generals do not give orders, the soldiers will order the soldiers. If the Katipunan is discovered, the revolution will inevitably break out...

R: Does the association count with its membership many persons in high society in Manila and in the provinces?

V: Unfortunately, no; in Manila and the provinces, there are about a hundred from the middle class; the rest are poor.

R: There is no other remedy but to attract to your association all the rich and influential persons of Manila and the provinces. You may also avail yourselves of Antonio Luna who is a very intelligent man, and who has free access to the homes of wealthy Filipinos. Luna, at the same time, can direct the campaign in case hostilities break out.

V: What shall we do if we fail to attract these aristocratic people to the Katipunan?

R: These Filipinos will be your worst enemies if you commit the imprudence of attacking the Spaniards without the necessary preparation. When they see you without arms, they will go over to the side of Spain and persecute you; and being Filipinos and rich too, they will win over your soldiers with their money.

V: And what are we to do then?

R: See to it that these persons are at least neutral—that they help neither the Spaniards nor the Filipinos.

V: Neutrals (sic)? By what means can we make them neutrals?

R: That is difficult to answer now. The means are born of circumstances and events...

The doctor invited me for a talk on the beach. Upon arriving at a certain place, he pointed to a spot in the sea where the boat that would take him to a foreign land would drop anchor. Later, during our walk back to his house, the following conversation took place between us:

Rizal: Tell our countrymen that while we are preparing for war against Spain, I desire to see a college established in Japan which will be converted later into a university for Filipino youths. I shall be greatly pleased to be the director of said college.

Valenzuela: I shall bear in mind all what you say and counsel, but I believe you would rather direct the revolution than manage the college.

R: I am ready for both.

V: As soon as we have arms and munitions, we shall try to take you out of Dapitan before the revolution starts in order that the Spaniards may not get to you and shoot you.

R: As soon as you obtain arms, start the war against Spain right away; do not bother about me for I will know how to get out of here by any craft with the help of the Moros. When it comes to the redemption of the country, you must not look behind for just one man.

V: If the revolution breaks out before schedule and you are still in Dapitan, the Spaniards will hold you and have you shot.

R: To die and conquer is pleasant; but to die and be conquered is painful.

The Spaniards, as Fr. Horacio de la Costa wrote, refused to release Rizal's "reasoned" condemnation of the revolution on the grounds that (as the Spanish Judge Advocate General commented) "Dr. Jose Rizal limits himself to criticizing the present insurrectionary movement as premature... as far as Rizal is concerned, the whole question is one of opportunity, not of principles and objectives... a message of this sort, far from promoting peace, is likely to stimulate for the future the spirit of rebellion."

Indeed, Rizal, in 1889, had observed, "All the little insurrections that have hitherto occurred in the Philippines have been the work of a few fanatics or mutinous officers who have had to deceive or cajole or exploit their followers to achieve their ends. And so they failed: all of them. Not one of these insurrections had the people behind it; not one sprang from a whole race's need; not one was fought for the rights of man or the claims of justice. On the contrary; once the people's wounds had healed and they recognized themselves as the victims of deceit, they applauded the fall of those who had perturbed their peaceful existence. But suppose a movement were to arise from the people themselves, with the miseries of the people as its motive power? What then?"

The question still lingers, because hard as some have tried, they have yet to put together such a movement. Not that our mainstream politicians since martial law have done any better; when Ferdinand Marcos moved the date of the inauguration of presidents from December 30 to June 30, he divorced the country's leadership from the heavy shadow of Rizal's insistence on self-control as the root of good governance.

Waiting children

YOUNG BLOOD

Felinor P. Villa

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

IT'S A WINDY MORNING AND I WAS OUT ON A PUMP-boat crossing Guimaras Strait to begin a day's work with young children, their parents and teachers in a town where life is simple but unbelievably idyllic. The waves were rocking the boat in the open sea, and I held on to my package, making sure it wouldn't get wet or dirty because an eager child was awaiting the delivery of goodies sent by his sponsor in the United States.

I arrived at the port of Jordan in one piece still clutching the huge package. A deaf-mute porter helped me carry it to the waiting vehicle and I gave him a few pesos for his help.

Then we are off to look for the sponsored child who would be getting his Christmas gift early. In this job, I feel like one of Santa's elves delivering gifts but not just on Christmas Eve but at any time of the year.

When we arrived at his school, we are told the child was absent. We ask for a volunteer to guide us to his house. Being new on the job, I don't get to visit the homes of sponsored children very often. Thus, I was surprised when the volunteer told us that the child's house was very far from the barangay. It was the beach but we had to pass through some fish ponds to get there.

The child's home was a one-room affair overlooking the beach where some fishing nets were being hung to dry. He told us he couldn't go to school because he was sick. But the truth was, his mother had asked him to take care of his two younger siblings while she helped his father with the work in the farm.

When I gave him his package of goodies, the boy was very surprised. He said the gift came too early for his birthday which was still a week away.

Then he opened his package and saw a shirt, ball pens, stationeries, candies and a pedometer with a card written by his sponsor saying that he should use the instrument to measure how many kilometers he walked to get to school.

The child was very excited over the gifts and I was happy to be the one to bring the good news and the nice package from abroad.

What's my job? I wouldn't really call it a job because for me, it's not work since I totally enjoy doing it. I don't count the hours sitting in front of a desk, but I go out in the field interacting with different kinds of people and introducing them to our organization's programs on health, education and environment and everything that has to do with the development of children. We organize development programs and projects that are designed to bring lasting and positive changes in the lives of children in need.

I am relatively new in my job, having joined the organization less than two years ago. But already I have seen the impact of our work and how we have helped many people.

Just like most career women, I had planned on leaving the country. But after I joined Save the Children, an international nongovernment organization, I have decided to stay. That is why, I say to those who are planning to leave the country for greener pastures abroad: "Before you go, look back and you will see many reasons to stay. I am staying because there is so much to be done here. The children are waiting and so I must stay. My job is saving children.

Felinor P. Villa, 26, is a program coordinator for Save the Children Federation Inc.

Lesson for a lifetime

Camille Diola

WHEN I WAS SMALL, MOM WOULD SIT ON MY BED BEFORE I went to sleep. She would recite the Rosary beside me and I would listen intently while sipping milk from the bottle until my eyes closed usually before the prayers were over. But as I grew older, I learned to make the appropriate responses and we would finish the Rosary together.

Recently I recalled how Mom taught me the Rosary as I was about to teach the same prayer that took me years to master. I felt my palms sweating and my heart pounding as we enter the chapel at Barangay Pansol, Loyola Heights in Quezon City. But when I looked around and saw my fellow volunteers cheerfully ushering the kids to their seats, I started to be inspired by the prospect of teaching the children one of the most beautiful prayers.

It was nine in the morning and 54 little girls were lined up in front of the table where I was sitting. They were excited. Some were pushing to join the queue while others held their little sisters' hand so they wouldn't run around. As they came up to my table, they told me their names and I would give them their name tags to stick on their shirts.

The scene reminded me of people lining up to buy lotto tickets, with so much excitement and hope. Except that here, we didn't have millions to give away. What we were going to share with the kids was something of immeasurable and lasting value.

We divided the children into two groups. Half of them were going to learn about the Fourth Commandment while the rest joined me and my partner to learn to pray the Rosary.

The children sat on the floor in semicircles facing their teachers for the morning. At first, it was difficult to get them to settle down, but when the volunteers began to narrate the mysteries of the Rosary and the story of Moses and the Ten Commandments, the little girls quickly fell silent and listened in rapt attention.

The volunteers teaching the Fourth Commandment asked their group to draw pictures showing their love for their parents. My partner and I distributed rosaries to those in our group so they could follow us as we taught them the prayer to be said on every bead.

A girl from our group named Elijah refused to accept the Rosary we were giving her, and I kept wondering why she didn't want it. Very much later, I felt someone tugging on my shirt and when I looked down, there was little Elijah asking for her Rosary. It was as if she had learned quickly the importance of the prayer and the beads.

As Elijah walked away, I looked around me and saw happy faces everywhere. I thought that maybe what we had taught them they were not going to leave behind. I was filled with hope that what they had learned for two hours might last them a whole lifetime.

Camille Diola, 17, is a BA Journalism freshman at the University of the Philippines, Diliman.

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Most harmful ConCom proposal

THE INQUIRER PUBLISHED TWO seemingly unrelated news items within a span of six days: the first, on the "Constitution" being proposed by the Consultative Commission (PDI, 12/16/05); the second, on the current fish scare in Rapu-Rapu, Albay caused by the Lafayette mine spills. (PDI, 12/21/05)

While the ConCom's proposal to scrap the 2007 elections is drawing the most heat, its recommendation to allow foreign-owned companies to exploit our lands and natural resources deserves equal, if not more, attention. For this proposal, which no doubt will include our mineral resources, will be the most harmful ConCom recommendation for our country.

The history of mining in the country is the same story that is being repeated, over and over, for years—a story that invariably leads into a disaster as toxic mine wastes spill into rivers and seas and destroy livelihoods and communities. Sadly, the recent spills at the Lafayette mine site add another chapter to that continuing tragic story.

Would it matter who is elected or not in 2007 when our lands are open for the taking by the highest foreign bidder?

What good is a parliamentary system when we no longer have control of our environment and natural resources; and when our rivers and coastal areas are dead, our forests gone, and our mountains disemboweled?

—JAYBEE GARGANERA,
national coordinator, Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (PhilDHRRA), 59 C. Salvador St., Loyola Heights, Quezon City,

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Twisting the truth

THIS REFERS TO THE INQUIRER NEWS report titled "PCGG now open to deal on P130-B coconut levy fund." (PDI, 12/20/05)

In that item, Camilo Sabio, chair of the Presidential Commission on Good Government, reportedly stated that he is open to a compromise with businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr. He, however, added that the approval of the proposed compromise would depend on the coconut farmers. He even had the gall to say that it would be wise if the coconut farmers entered into such an agreement since it would take a long time to resolve the levy cases with finality.

Sabio should be reminded that there are far more coconut farmers who strongly oppose the compromise agreement (that he, together with Archbishop Fernando Capalla, has been peddling since last year) than those who have been misled to favor it. Coconut farmers oppose the compromise deal for the simple reason that, on May 7, 2004, the Sandiganbayan ruled that the San Miguel Corp. shares of stock are owned by the government "in trust" for all coconut farmers. Also, there is a pending motion for the issuance of a writ of execution on the decision. More importantly, the Supreme Court categorically declared the coco levy funds as "prima facie" public funds. Why should the coconut farmers compromise these judicial victories of theirs by entering into an amicable settlement? And why is Sabio giving the Supreme Court ruling a different interpretation that runs contrary to the interests of the small coconut farmers?

It appears that Sabio is seeking to twist the truth to accommodate Danding Cojuangco. Sabio's tack would negate all the victories the PCGG, under the late PCGG chair Haydee Yorac, achieved for the coconut farmers. Is the compromise agreement a part of the policy of the present administration to ensure its survival?

The country's small coconut farmers have lost their confidence in Sabio and for that he should immediately resign his post.

—ROMEO ROYANDOYAN,
executive director, Philippine Peasant Institute, sfatc@ppi.bayandsl.ph

The joy of sharing

I READ ASUNCION DAVID-MARAMBA'S article, "For every family, a scholar." (PDI, 11/25/05)

I am very proud to tell you that our small town of San Esteban, Ilocos Sur, has been doing that for the last 20 years or so. Most of our scholars come from upland communities. They help in doing household chores while they go to school. Right now, we have about 20 scholars in high school and college.

I myself have three: one stays at home; the other two with their families as they are from this town and I was able to get relatives abroad to help them. Of the three, one is finishing the teacher's course this year; the other two next year as teacher and as a nurse.

It's such a nice feeling to be able to help students finish their studies and to see them succeed.

—DOLORES T. VERGARA,
San Esteban, Ilocos Sur

Warning signs in floods

SEEING ON TV CALAPAN CITY (AND MANY other places in the country) under water is very worrisome.

For decades, our watersheds have been utterly neglected. Congress does not consider them a priority concern. Watershed management practices in the country have become outmoded, no longer applied in other countries.

Floods can be viewed as a symptom of the political, social and economic "tsunami" that has kept progress away from our upland communities. The creeping poverty there is worse today than it was after the war. So bad now that it is also taking its toll on the productivity of the lowlands—through the floods.

Floods are what we get back in return for a grave sin we, of the present generations, have committed, and for which we will be despised by the generations to come. Floods are an environmental scourge that will stay with us for a long, long time, and their dire consequences will spare no one in the future.

The warning signs are there for all to see. Our political leaders should act on them with a sense of urgency. It makes sense that we start petitioning our leaders to reconcile and make patriotic sacrifices so that society can start refocusing on our real problems.

—POBLEO M. FLORECE,
regional technical director, Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Region 5, Rawis, Legazpi City

CA members await history's judgment

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT FOR Justice and Peace, together with the survivors of human rights violations and their families, see the confirmation of Gen. Jovito Palparan's promotion to the rank of major general, despite the criminal charges filed against him, as a deplorable act of the Commission on Appointments. The members of the commission have shown no respect for our judicial system.

It is unfortunate that Palparan's notoriety has earned him the admiration of our lawmakers. The pattern and string of human rights abuses committed in areas that were under his command now appear to be viewed by them as meritorious achievements that make him worthy of more promotions.

Be it said that they who have had a hand in Palparan's promotion will be judged harshly by history for their actions.

—LOVELLA DE CASTRO,
acting deputy secretary general, Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace (EMJP), emjp2005@gmail.com; RIC MELENDREZ, Ugop Waraynon (a support group of Leyteños and Samareños based in Metro Manila)

Gender-sensitive and equitable

PART OF THE CAPTION OF AN INQUIRER front-page picture (PDI, 12/18/05) read: "That the Filipino has within himself the skills, the industry, creativity, the powers of mind and heart to dazzle the world."

Now, please don't leave the womenfolk behind. The statement would have been better written thus: "That the Filipinos have within themselves the skills, the industry, the creativity, the powers of mind and heart to dazzle the world."

This rewritten statement is more encompassing, more gender-sensitive, more equal and equitable, and more realistic.

—MCS ABIS, zsyle@yahoo.com

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Olongapo prosecutors pursue fight for US Marines' custody

From page A1

cise primary jurisdiction when we cannot enforce the very laws in our country that are applicable in this case?"

While respect must be accorded to the 1999 Philippine-US Visiting Forces Agreement, Jalandoni said Philippine authorities should "not be subservient" to foreign interests.

At least one case of the US military handing over to Japanese authorities custody of an American soldier accused of raping a local girl in Okinawa, where the United States has a military base, may provide Jalandoni some food for thought (see In the Know box on this page).

Jalandoni served notice about his intentions to pursue the custody fight a day after he and Assistant Prosecutor Raymond Viray filed charges of rape with conspiracy against Staff Sgt. Chad Brian Smith and Lance Corporals Daniel Smith, Keith Silkwood and Dominic Duplantis, and their Filipino driver, Timoteo Soriano Jr. at the regional trial court here.

Complaints against two others—Cpl. Corey Burris and Lance Cpl. Albert Lara—were dismissed.

'VFA prevails'

Undersecretary Zosimo Paredes, who is executive director of the Presidential Commission on the VFA, earlier said that "when there's a clash between a domestic procedural law and a treaty like the VFA, the treaty prevails."

On matters of custody, Article V of the VFA provides "the custody of any United States personnel over whom the Philippines is to exercise jurisdiction shall immediately reside with the United States military authorities, if they so request, from the commission of the offense until completion of all judicial proceedings."

The alleged rape took place on Nov. 1 inside a moving van at the Subic Bay Freeport.

The US government has invoked the VFA in asserting custody of the soldiers.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said the impression he got from a US Embassy statement on Tuesday was that American officials "will insist on custody during the trial."

He said Washington had not responded to Manila's Nov. 16 custody request, "but the picture has somehow changed with the indictment ... You now have the court to reckon with."

"I suppose they will politely reject our request and if we are not satisfied, we can insist on negotiating on custody," Gonzalez said, adding that "there could be" a custody battle.

Benjamin Formoso, lawyer of Smith, said he would fight efforts by local courts to gain custody of his client.

Americans won't give in

"We will not just give in," Formoso said.

He said he would file a motion to quash the arrest warrant on his client.

Smith's lawyer said he believed the VFA and its US custody provision applied in the case.

"If the custody is surrendered, that's going to set a precedent on future VFA [exercises]," Formoso said by phone.

Formoso also claimed the prosecutors' resolution would "hit the economies" of Olongapo City and the freeport because it would be perceived as "anti-American."

The trial, he asserted, would also cause the Philippine government a lot of expense because, among other things, an expert would have to be hired to confirm the veracity of the medico-legal tests done on the woman.

Lawyer John Coluso, counsel for Silkwood and Duplantis, said the custody battle would heat up only if the Philippine government or the prosecutors insisted on taking custody of the soldiers.

Lawyer Francisco Rodrigo, counsel for Carpentier, declined a phone interview.

The victim's lawyer, Katrina Legarda, said "everything about custody and prosecution of the Marines is now in the hands of the government."

Interviewed later on ANC, Legarda said she and her legal group had nothing to do with the custody issue as it was a matter for the government.

VFA a mistake?

"If the Philippine government is going to give it up, what can we do?" she said.

"What is important is whether or not the Philippine government has woken up to the idea that maybe the VFA is wrong," she said.

The rape case is seen as a litmus test for the VFA. Leftist groups have said the case shows how the United States violates Philippine sovereignty.

Under Philippine law, rape is punishable by life imprisonment or death if there were aggravating circumstances.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that now that the case was in court, "let us leave justice to take its course instead of raising speculations that will only mislead the public and affect legal proceedings."

US relations

Amid criticisms that the Arroyo administration was more concerned about its diplomatic ties with Washington, Bunye said: "Both governments have assured that whatever the outcome, it will not in any way affect the close ties and friendship that bind the two countries. Philippine sovereignty and justice shall be upheld while the rights of the accused will be fully protected." Bunye reiterated that both the Philippine and US governments were for the "swift resolution of this isolated case but always through the observance of due process." *With reports from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Jamie Alarcon, PDI Research, AP, AFP*

IN THE KNOW

The Japanese way

UNDER THE JAPAN-US STATUS OF FORCES AGREEMENT (SOFA), American military personnel may not be turned over to Japanese custody before indictment, a process which usually takes up to a month.

However, after three US servicemen were charged and later convicted of gang-raping a 12-year-old Okinawan girl in 1995, Washington agreed to give "sympathetic consideration" to the automatic transfer of suspects in crimes such as murder and rape.

This agreement was tested in another Okinawa rape case. In 2002, a Filipina base worker alleged that Maj. Michael Brown had attempted to rape her. Both were in their early forties.

US authorities initially refused to hand Brown over to the Japanese, but his indictment on Dec. 19, 2002 finally delivered him into their custody.

Brown was convicted on June 8, 2003 of molestation and sentenced to a year in jail and fined $1,400.

The court stopped short of finding Brown guilty of attempted rape, ruling there was no sufficient evidence to prove it.

The Filipina plaintiff unsuccessfully attempted to withdraw the charges after $13,500 was deposited in her bank account. Brown's camp denied they had anything to do with it, and the source of the money has never been determined.

Also in 2003, the US turned over Lance Cpl. Jose Torres, 21, to Japanese authorities three weeks before he was indicted for allegedly beating and raping a 19-year-old woman, also from Okinawa. Torres was sentenced to three and a half years in prison.

Jamie Alarcon, PDI Research

12-story Rizal shrine Jordanian's gift to Filipinos

From page A1

of its kind in the world.

To Asfour, the shrine is a symbol of the Filipinos' unity and hope. He says its construction was inspired by love and by the heroism of those who fought for freedom.

The main edifice—the centerpiece of a 7.5-hectare complex—is a three-arch concrete Romanesque structure up to 12 stories high.

A giant bronze bust of Rizal will be installed in the structure.

Value of patriotism

"This is a historical, cultural and educational shrine, which will teach our children the values of patriotism, love for fellowmen and unity in the family," said Asfour, a father of three.

He said he hoped the shrine would cause a transformation in a country beset by "corruption, depression and other ills of society."

The shrine, which faces east, offers a panoramic view of a surrounding valley and the greenery of sprawling rice fields that complement the urban landscape of Solano and Bayombong towns.

Behind the complex lurk the Cordillera mountains.

A sweeping glance

From the shrine, on a clear sunny day, said Asfour, one could glimpse the towns of Bagabag, Quezon and Ambaguio in Nueva Vizcaya and Lamut and Lagawe towns in Ifugao.

"It takes you two and-a-half hours to travel by land to all these towns. Here, all it takes is a single, sweeping glance," he said.

Perched on the tips of the concrete arches is a 3-meter fiberglass globe installed with 16 100-watt bulbs that light the village's skyline at night.

Bad weather

Asfour described his project as the "Filipinos' gift to the world," offered to people of all races whose lives were touched by Rizal.

He had intended to complete the shrine in time for the observance of Rizal's 109th death anniversary on Dec. 30. But bad weather in the past weeks delayed its inauguration.

He said he needed two more weeks to complete the finishing work, including plastering of the arches and the laying of about 1,500 square meters of marble tiles.

Heroes' temple

At the shrine's entrance is a 10-meter tower where the province's 175-year history is etched. The main complex also has a welcome arch, a children's skating rink with a globe at the center, a water fountain and a nine-meter flagpole.

The main shrine is surrounded by 14 seven-foot arches that will house the busts of the country's other heroes.

Asfour said the shrine would have audio-visual presentations depicting the lives of heroes and their contributions to history.

He has yet to decide which heroes would occupy the 14 smaller shrines that are lined up alongside candle-shaped concrete railings that enclose the main complex.

For the children

"The candles symbolize our heroes as lights that would teach our children the right path, and a constant reminder of how they taught us the value of sacrifice," Asfour said.

The shrine will also house an eye and dental clinic that will treat indigent patients for free, a conference room for the Knights of Rizal, a modern library and an online computer resource center.

"It will give our children everything they need to know: History, geography, everything. They can use the computers and learn about the latest technology. They can zoom in on satellite pictures of even the smallest thing in their neighborhood, at their fingertips," Asfour said.

Room for helicopters

At the foot of the hill are two 2-story buildings that will serve as training centers for food processing, cosmetology and caregiver courses, trainees' dormitories, and a sports and recreation facility.

Built next to the complex are two helipads, the bigger of which can accommodate four helicopters at a time.

With God's help

Asfour spends most of his time supervising workers at the construction site.

"I am the architect, the engineer, the artist. I'm building it with the help of God," he said.

Asfour said he drew inspiration for the shrine from his family's "generations of relationship with Rizal."

But the idea of building the shrine first came to Asfour when he arrived in the country 24 years ago to repay a Filipino truck driver who he said saved his life.

Good Samaritan

Like the Good Samaritan, the man had stopped to give Asfour food and water as he lay unconscious in his car in the Arabian desert.

Then newly married to his Filipino wife, Zenaida, Asfour first caught a glimpse of the hills of Casat from a house in La Torre village where he once lived.

"That can well be the best place for a heroes' shrine," he had said then.

The rest is history.

Why the doctor is in, and working in barrios

DECAMPONG

GUINAL

MACAPODI

RAKI-IN

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From page A1

many things that the P100,000 could buy. There was a bigger sacrifice: He was supposed to leave in September 2004 along with his wife, a nurse who had been recruited by another Saudi hospital. He let her go alone. He stayed behind.

From his Amaipacpac hometown, Macapodi moved to another small health center, this time in Tabina, Zamboanga del Sur.

Welcomed like Pacquiao

On the morning of his first day at work, this graduate of the Mindanao State University was greeted with a warm welcome as if he were Manny Pacquiao returning from a title bout. By nighttime, he had run out of medicines.

It was too bad, he said, that some diseases were preventable but there were no drugs. It was worse, he added, that there were more patients than he could handle. But there was no other doctor. In fact, a few older residents had never seen a doctor all their lives.

"I just want to help," he told the Inquirer in a phone interview, 25 minutes after he supervised an operation in the Tabina health center.

Fulfilling

"The job is fulfilling," he added, recalling how he had reduced the number of patients at the health center.

Macapodi said he had heard of another Muslim doctor, 28-year-old Elmer Jacinto of Basilan, who topped the board examination for doctors in 2004, but who decided to work as a nurse in the United States. [The **Inquirer first broke the story of Elmer.**]

Aside from being a doctor, Macapodi also teaches health care to Christians, Muslims, tribesmen and suspected rebels. He's both a doctor and a nurse to the victims of natural and man-made calamities like shootings and bombings.

He refused to talk about his take-home pay. But a new municipal doctor, he said, starts with P15,000 a month.

He had no regrets, he said.

When at home, he is both father and mother to his four kids.

Healing communities

Like Macapodi, 32-year-old Guinal graduated from Mindanao State University. A participant in the Doctors for the Barrios of former health secretary now Sen. Juan Flavier, she had also applied for work in Saudi Arabia yet didn't pursue it.

She said she would enjoy working in the community than in a hospital since it was her desire to heal a community rather than individual patients.

No to Singapore

Another doctor refused an offer to work in Singapore. Ma. Eloisa C. Vidar, 33, a graduate of Pamantasan ng Maynila, said that she did not need that many material things. Away from her home in Canlubang, Laguna, she is now assigned to Del Carmen, Surigao del Norte.

Another Muslim, 32-year-old Decampong said she didn't have to go abroad since as a Muslim woman, she was expected to be of service to her family. A resident of Iligan, she is now assigned in Bayang, Lanao del Sur.

Leaders for health project

Macapodi, Vidar, Decampong and Guinal are among the 40 doctors undergoing training at the Ateneo de Manila's Leaders for Health Project, a program conceived by former Health Secretary Alfredo R. A. Bengzon, now president and chief executive officer of The Medical City on Ortigas Avenue in Pasig City.

Bengzon put up the LHP program three years ago to help avert the exodus of doctors from the country.

Masteral degree

Bengzon's program was a carryover of Flavier's Doctors for the Barrios, with a twist. It encourages the doctors to do community service and rewards them with a masteral degree on public health with their own barrio practice as its core.

So far, it has graduated 22 masters in community health management from the first batch of doctor-volunteer participants with funds donated by Pfizer Philippines. The program is in need of new sponsors for the next batch.

Bengzon said the program seeks to "reorient and retrain" doctors about the medical profession and make them reshape the way Filipinos think, feel and behave about public health.

Partners for health

For instance, the program aims for doctors and the community to be jointly responsible for the health of the residents. So it brings together the mayor, municipal health officer and the community leaders in an "enlightened understanding" of health and the health systems.

"Our people can't just cry and die because we are running out of doctors; public health need not be left only in the hands of doctors," Bengzon told the Inquirer.

Vidar said she still had her idealism with her. So she took the challenge of joining LHP.

Passion for helping

Guinal said the program gives her more opportunities for personal and professional growth and development. LHP offered her a master's degree and a salary, she said.

Most of all, she said she was given a venue to express her passion for helping and serving others. With all that she had gone through, she said that nothing compared to her LHP experience.

Honor roll

Some of the other doctors in the Ateneo leadership program are Joseph B. Ague, 47, now assigned in Carrascal, Surigao del Sur; Cynthia S. Algery, 42, now in Libmanan, Camarines Sur; Rebecca R. Aquino, 44, now in Agusan del Sur; Mary Faith Baban-Briones, 30, now in San Miguel, Zamboanga del Sur; Ma. Cecilia V. Camangon, 31, in San Benito, Surigao del Norte; Felma M. Caybot, 45, in Prosperidad, Agusan del Norte; Tomas B. Cruiz, 35, in Cantilan, Surigao del Sur; Alethea de Guzman, 25, in Ivana, Batanes; Jesse Diamante, 47, now in Itbayat, Batanes; Roderick R. Embuido, 31, now in Kumalarang, Zamboanga del Sur; Hairam R. Encendencia, 36, now in La Paz, Agusan del Sur; Allan A. Evangelista, 34, now in Catigbian, Bohol;

Ma. Theresa R. Kho, 45, now in Magallanes, Agusan del Norte; Francis L. Langi Jr., 30, now in Zumaraga, Western Samar; Rey Millena, now in Calabanga, Camarines Sur; Zenaida G. Patalcorin, 50, now in San Francisco, Agusan del Sur; Pretchell G. Patrocinio, 28, now in Dinagat, Surigao del Norte; Rosa Maria Rempillo, 37, now in Sto. Domingo, Albay; Randy C. Saavedra, 28, now in San Jorge, Western Samar; Lea P. Brun-Salvatierra, 33, now in Bindoy, Negros Occidental; Pamela C. Talento, 33, now in Lapuyan, Zamboanga del Sur; Johny T. Tan, 41, now in Jovellar, Albay; Juan A. Tolentino, 35, now in Las Nieves, Agusan del Norte; Eloisa C. Vidar, 33, now in Dimataling, Zamboanga, del Sur; January V. Yabut, 28, now in Burgos, Surigao del Norte; Marie Joy C. Advincula, 30, now in San Sebastian, Western Samar; Aida Zerlinne J. Alcid, 35, now in General Luna, Surigao del Norte; Christine S. Balasbas, 32, now in Kawayan, Biliran;

Tricia B. Balilo, 32, now in DOH CHD Bicol, Legaspi City; Robert Philip V. Briones, 36, now in Loreto, Surigao del Norte; Russel A. Camua, 31, now in San Jose, Surigao del Norte; Pauline R. Convocar, 30, now in Socorro, Surigao del Norte; Richard R. Lariosa, 31, now in Uyugan, Batanes; Vivian L. Makabali, 48, now in Dapa, Surigao del Norte; Joselito M. Montalban, 35, now in Malimono, Surigao del Norte; Joselito M. Montalban, 46, now in Sta. Monica, Surigao del Norte;

Prosperidad Silveron, 51, now in Pilar, Surigao del Norte; Cornelio A. Solis, 34, now in Jiabong, Western Samar; Jeryl R. Torayno, 35, now in Marabut, Western Samar, and Romulo P. Ybiernas, 35, now in Tubajon, Surigao del Norte.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The world loves survivors: GMA cited by Time

By Christine O. Avendaño

THE WORLD LOVES SURvivors and Time Magazine recognized this by placing President Macapagal-Arroyo on its list of "People Who Mattered" in 2005.

After all, in a year of disasters, didn't she survive the worst crisis in her political life—impeachment, coup rumors, "jueteng" and other scandals?

"I think it can't escape the notice of everyone, especially around the world, for a republic such as the Philippines to have a president such as President Arroyo to be able to withstand the onslaught of political criticisms from day one of her being declared as winner in 2004 and having gone through impeachment, and of course with so many other issues made to bear upon a president," gushed Executive Secretary Ermita on learning that his boss was in the internationally distinguished list.

"Everyone will definitely take notice that our President is indeed prepared," added Ermita, who spoke to reporters in Baguio City where the President is vacationing with her family and some members of her staff.

Ms Arroyo's inclusion on the Time list "shows the kind of stuff" that Ms Arroyo is made of, Ermita said, noting that despite the political turmoil, the country's economy continued to grow with the peso at its strongest in two years.

Other world leaders that made it to Time's list included US President George Bush, US Vice President Dick Cheney, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who themselves had to fight off considerable criticism if not opposition.

"The mettle of a leader… in any endeavor is tested when he is given problems and is able to overcome them with flying colors," Ermita said, still gushing.

In Baguio City, the President said yesterday that winning the "war on terror" and advancing peace talks with local rebel groups were among the key issues she would focus on next year.

She also told reporters that she would take up efforts to revise the Constitution, streamline key government offices and review environmental policies. *(See story on Page A2)*

"We will concentrate on these next year," said Ms Arroyo. *With a report from AFP*

To Baguio folk, 14.6 Celsius is 'warm'

From page A1

been expecting a bitingly cold Christmas season this year.

Despite the northerly winds that have been sweeping through eastern Luzon, the temperature in this mountain city had continued to rise the past three days, according to weather experts.

Missing nippy nights

Pedro Rigos, who has been monitoring the weather for 40 years at the weather observatory here, said residents have been missing the nippy evenings and foggy nights of December to February when Baguio is at its coldest.

On Tuesday, residents woke up to an unusually warm morning when the temperature hit 14.6, which was higher than last year's 12 Celsius on the same day.

Records of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration station here showed that on Dec. 23 and Dec. 24, the mercury dropped to 11 degrees.

But the temperature rose to 12.4 degrees on Christmas Day and 13.8 degrees on Dec. 26.

GMA cold

But for visitors like President Macapagal-Arroyo, her family and some Cabinet secretaries, it was cold enough, they told the reporters at a dinner on Tuesday that they hosted in The Mansion, the President's official residence here.

And no wonder, as in their native Manila, the temperatures on Tuesday were 23 Celsius at its coldest and 31 at its warmest.

The most recent that Metro Manila residents experienced cold weather was in January 2003 when temperatures dropped to as low as 17.5 degrees. But this was nothing compared to the 8 degrees that was recorded in Baguio at the time.

Baguio recorded its coldest temperature on Jan. 18, 1961, when the mercury dipped to 6.3 Celsius.

On Jan. 18, 2003, the temperature dropped to 8 degrees, the coldest in 10 years.

During the Panagbenga (the Baguio Flower Festival) on Feb. 16 last year, the mercury dropped to 9.4 degrees.

TAKING TIME OUT FROM HER R & R, President Arroyo supposedly on vacation holds a press conference at The Mansion, the official presidential residence in Baguio City. Also in photo are Secretaries Cerge Remonde and Ignacio Bunye.

PCPO-MALACAÑANG PHOTO

As time goes by

But it was a different story this year, weather experts and residents said.

"As time goes by, Baguio is getting warmer, especially if you ask those who have been living in the city for a long time. This is most likely caused by overpopulation, air pollution and global warming," Rigos said in an interview.

He said the city would experience wet and cooler nights until yearend, but temperatures would not go lower than 10 degrees.

Rigos said the city should expect rain showers in the next three days because of an active low pressure area 400 km northwest of Palawan.

But whether it's warm or cold, fur jackets, coats, shawls, bonnets and other warm clothing have been selling briskly on Baguio's streets, malls and *ukay-ukay* (used clothing) shops.

Vendors said their customers were mostly "lowlanders" like the President and her party who are spending the Christmas holidays in Baguio.

The Baguio health department has advised residents and tourists here to keep themselves warm because of the unpredictable weather in the city this month.

Dr. Florence Reyes, city health officer, said coughs and colds, which are common respiratory ailments during the cold months, should not be ignored as these could lead to deadly bronchopneumonia.

"Viruses are everywhere and our best defense is eating fruits and vegetables daily to strengthen our immune system," she said.

Baguio City, at 1,520 meters above sea level the Philippines' highest city, was developed in the early 1900s by the American colonial government as a summer retreat. Built on a plateau on the Cordillera Central in Northern Luzon, the city enjoys temperatures that are at least 8 degrees cooler than the lowlands.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TV GUIDE

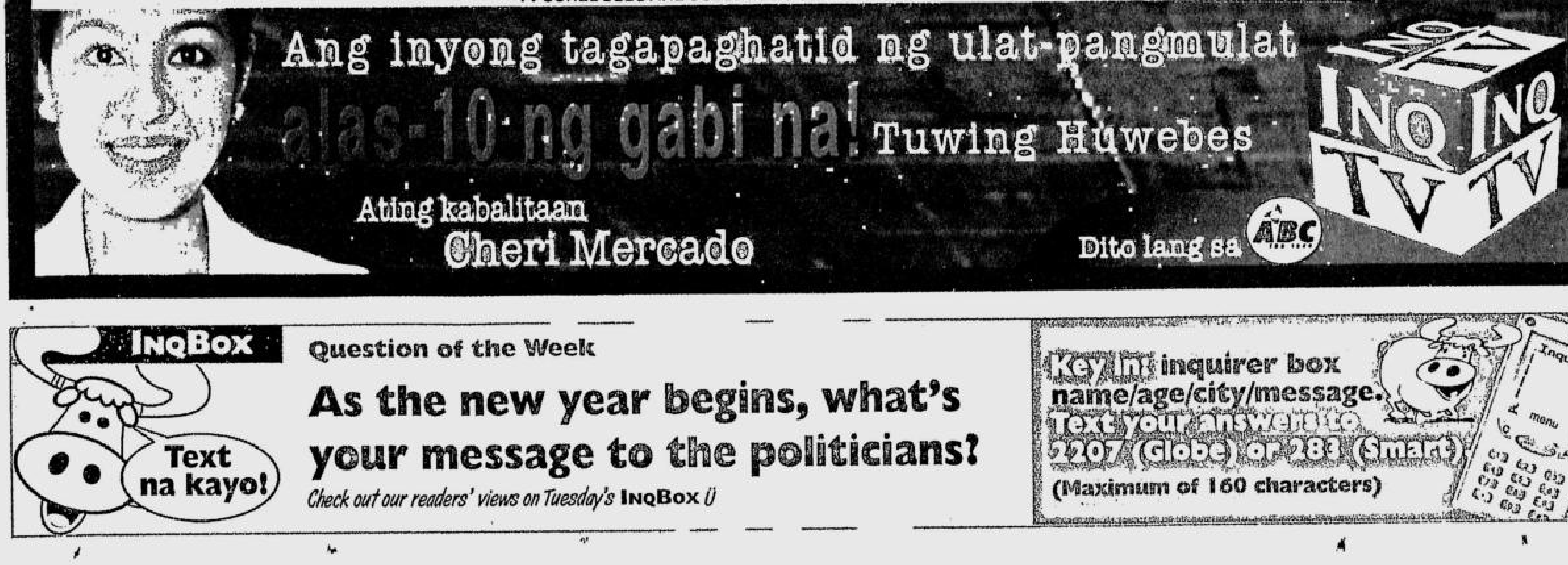
Thursday, December 29, 2005

Watch Pinoy Power in America's Hottest Dance Challenge!

SO YOU THINK YOU CAN DANCE
SEE IT FIRST ON ABC
Friday 10pm
ClickTheCity.com

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5			Winner TV Shopping		Barclay's EPL		Goals		Sentro	Mumbai Thrillers	S.O.S		Wala Yan Sa Lolo Ko		Big News	Rockstar (Result Show)	Inq TV		Billboard On-Air
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Little Amy	Mr. Bean	Naruto	Amazing Twins	Meteor Garden Season 2	TV Patrol World	Pilipinas Game KNB?	Mga Anghel Na Walang Langit	Only You	Vietnam Rose	Pinoy Big Brother	Maalaala Mo Kaya			Insider
AXN		CSI: Miami (Season 3)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 5)		Mondo Magic	Samsung Sports World	PSI Factor (Season III)		24		Gamemax	Hollywood's Greatest Stunts	Fear Factor (Season IV)		The World's Wildest Commercials	The World's Wildest Commercials	The Contender Special	
Cartoon Network	Johnny Bravo	Dexter's Laboratory	Powerpuff Girls	Tom & Jerry Show	Accelacracers GP			The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy		Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers	Battle B-Daman	Machine Robo-Rescue	X-Men Evolution	Samurai Jack	Justice League	Static Shock	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers
Cinema One		Ang Ang Kulay Ng Mukha Ng Diyos				May Minamahal				Milan				Super Idol				Hari Ng Selda	
Cinemax			Groundhog Day			Little Women (5:15 PM)				First Target (7:15 PM)				Sea Ghost			Death Becomes Her (10:35PM)		
CNN				Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
Discovery Channel		Hour Asia		Hour China		Wild Discovery		Anatomy Of A Crash		Extreme Machines		Ultimates		Austin Stevens		Mega Moves		Power Zone	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Sabrina, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			Lizzie Maguire		Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Ranger	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN						Winter X Games Classic		Boxing Series Friday Night Fights				Sportscenter Asia	Pro Billiards 05 Men's Trick Shot Magic		Rewind 2005 Kaohsiung World Pool Champ				
ETC		GBB	Knock First	1 Hr. Edited Version Of Today Show		Elimidate	Change of Heart	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	Good Morning Miami	Commited	American Dreams		Queer Eye For The Straight Guy		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
EWTN	The Catholic Faith & Vatican II	Angelus (3:15PM)	Virtue Storybook	Image Of God	Your Vocation, God's Call In Your Life	Rosary With Mother Angelica	Good Or Evil, Who Decides?	EWTN Gallery	Where God Weeps	EWTN Live (Encore) With Fr. Mitch Pacwa		Catechisms And Controversies	The Word Was Made Flesh	Daily Mass (SAP) Live		Angelus (10:15PM)	St. Thomas More Faithful Statesman	The Journey Home Encore	
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	Date With Tiffany		Dragonball Z	Slam Dunk	Frog Prince	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Sugo	Etheria	Starstruck 3	Jewel In The Palace		Magpakailanman			Saksi
Hallmark Channel	Bewitched IV	Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye II		HCA: The Fairytaler	Sesame Street		Who's The Boss	Bewitched IV	The Nanny III	Changi		Sue Thomas, F.B. Eye II Christmas Carol, The Musical			Judging Amy (10:35PM)		Wire In The Blood (11:25PM)		
HBO			Last Man Standing			Dreamcatcher (5:10 PM)					Beauty And The Beast			The Matrix Revolutions				HBO Coming Attractions 2006	Dead Calm (11:20PM)
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		Home Shopping Network		ME TV					IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV	Dr Katz	Just For Laughs (Gags)	Beat The Geeks	Jack In The Box				Cinematech	Family Guy	Mad TV		Reno 911	Crank Yankers	South Park	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Hip-Hop Nation	Ride With Funk Master Flex	Late Show With David Letterman	
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fix	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Tyler's Ultimate	E! News Weekend		Good Finds	Life & Style		Douglas Dynasty		Road & Track	Back To Basics
MTV Philippines	5 Things About Pussycat Dolls	MTV Cribs	That MTV Chart Show		Pimp My Ride	Pop Inc.		MTV Hits				MTV Hits	Get Spotted	TRL		Punk'D	Brand New	MTV Hits	VH1 Video Collections
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYX News		Star MYX	MYXILOG	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYX Presents		MYX Bandarito	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX
National Geographic		Megastructures		Explorations Powered By Duracell	Seismic Seconds	D-Day		Top 5		Wow!		About Asia		National Geographic Specials		Megastructures		Explorations Powered By Duracell	Egypt Detectives
NBN		Value Vision		New Life TV Shopping		Teledyaryo	Diyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila?	Tinig ng Bayan (Live)				Teledyaryo				Network Forum		Bantay OCW With Susan K	
Nickelodeon	Blue's Clues/ What Planet Are You From	Rugrats	Hey Arnold!	My Life As A Teenage Robot Right On Top	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Fairly Odd Parents	All That	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	Drake & Josh	The Fairly Odd Parents	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Rocket Power	Chalkzone	The Wild Thornberrys	The Angry Beavers	The Brothers Garcia
PBO			Nandito Ako				Axil Ni Cecilia				PBO Fight Night				Ang Pagbabalik Ni Pedro Penduko				Nonoy Zuñiga Concert
Qtv		Bodyguard	Sister Hungry Heart	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Star	Hoteller	All In	Laugh To Laugh: Ang Kulit	O, Mare Ko		News On Q	Women's Desk		Groupee TV	
RPN 9	TV Shopping		Defenders Of The Earth	Hey Arnold!	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	As Told By Ginger	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	WWE Smackdown		The Ultimate Fighter		Revelations		Newswatch Now	Video Hit Parade	Kasangga Mo Ang Langit	Police Hour
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Sony Bmg Video			
Solar Sports		WTA 2005 Tour Champs by Porsche Los Angeles					NBA Game Kings @ Clippers					Sportsdesk		NBA Game Rockets @ Hornets					NBA Inside Stuff
Sports Plus	NBA Game Philadelphia @ Denver					Party Poker.com World Open 2005				Raceworld		NFL 2005, Chicago @ Green Bay						Celebrity Poker Tournament 2	
Star Movies				Ravenous			Curse Of The Komodo				Catch That Kid (7:25 PM)			Stepmom				Challenge The Last Disciple	
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Whose Line Is It Anyway?	Angel		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Friends	Scrubs	8 Simple Rules	Ms World/ John Lenon, Working Class Hero		The Apprentice		Friends	Scrubs
Studio 23		Yugioh Duel Monster		UAAP				Batman Beyond	Pinoy Big Brother	Wazzup Wazzup	The Contender		Alias (8:20 PM)	Desperate Housewives		News Central	Oprah		Salt

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.



Ang inyong tagapaghatid ng ulat-pangmulat
alas-10 ng gabi na! Tuwing Huwebes
Ating kabalitaan
Cheri Mercado
Dito lang sa ABC
INQ TV

INQBox
Text na kayo!
Question of the Week
As the new year begins, what's your message to the politicians?
Check out our readers' views on Tuesday's INQBox
Key in: inquirer box name/age/city/message.
Text your answers to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)
(Maximum of 160 characters)

Checkpoints up to monitor entry of banned firecrackers

By Jocelyn R. Uy

WITH PEOPLE SET TO CELEBRATE THE coming of the new year, the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) has intensified its "Oplan Iwas Paputok" campaign.

NCRPO Director Vidal Querol yesterday ordered the commanders of the five police districts in Metro Manila to beef up the implementation of the campaign to ensure a safe and peaceful New Year's Eve celebration.

He also called for the activation of checkpoints and choke points in the metropolis to prevent the entry of illegal firecrackers.

Republic Act 7183, the law regulating the sale, manufacture, distribution and use of deadly firecrackers and pyrotechnic devices, will be strictly enforced against individuals who violate the law, Querol warned.

The police official, meanwhile, reminded the public to light up firecrackers only in designated zones such as open public places like basketball courts and plazas.

To civilians with itchy trigger fingers, Querol offered the use of police firing ranges. "We give the public a chance to fire in a place where they could not do harm to the lives and properties of their neighbors," he said.

Querol, however, warned policemen that those who fire their guns on New Year's Eve will be suspended or dismissed from the service.

To ensure the safety of her constituents, Marikina City Mayor Marides Fernando has prohibited the sale of powerful firecrackers in the city's public markets.

Residents, she said, should just go to the River Banks Center in Barangay Barangka on Dec. 30, where the city government will hold a 15-minute fireworks display after a three-hour concert.

"The fireworks display will be for the entire city so our residents will no longer have to buy their own firecrackers," Fernando said.

In Malabon City, Mayor Canuto Oreta called on residents to welcome the New Year by banging on pots and pans, or by holding street parties, instead of setting off firecrackers.

"These devices have caused deaths and injuries," he told INQUIRER.

Oreta added that several fires that occurred in previous years were also due to firecrackers. He said the city's fire and police departments would be on alert from Dec. 29 to Jan. 1 to respond to emergencies.

As the police stepped up its drive against illegal firecrackers, 11 people were detained while their wares were seized in Valenzuela and Malabon Tuesday.

Supt. Rafael Santiago, the head of the Special Operations Group of the Northern Police District, said the raids were conducted on Sanchez St. in Tenejeros, Malabon City, and in front of the Royal Mall along Paseo de Blas in Valenzuela City.

Seized from the suspects were baby rockets, Judas belts and imported firecrackers estimated to be worth P18,000.

The vendors were eventually released for humanitarian reasons. They were warned, however, that they would face charges if they would be caught again. *With Edson C. Tandoc Jr. and Nancy C. Carvajal*

WITH 2005 drawing to a close, a different kind of snake has been spotted in various stores selling firecrackers. This '*sawa*' (python) can be bought from P400 to P1,800. JOAN BONDOC

MMDA enforcers' accreditation with LGUs urged

By Jocelyn R. Uy

TO AVOID A BREAKDOWN IN TRAFFIC DIScipline following the ruling of the Supreme Court stripping the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) of its police powers, the agency should allow its traffic enforcers to be deputized by Metro mayors.

Joey Salgado, Makati Information and Community Relations Department head, told the INQUIRER yesterday that a breakdown in traffic discipline was possible, following the court ruling which prevents the MMDA from issuing traffic violation receipts and confiscating the drivers' licenses.

"The MMDA enforcers will lose the respect of motorists. So to avoid all complications in traffic management, MMDA chair Bayani Fernando must abide by the court decision and have his enforcers deputized," Salgado said.

Pasay City Mayor Wenceslao "Peewee" Trinidad told the INQUIRER that Metro Manila mayors have been pushing for the accreditation of MMDA enforcers by local government units (LGUs) for some time.

"We have been proposing that to Fernando for two years now. But he doesn't want it," said Trinidad, spokesperson of the Metro Manila Mayors' League.

The mayors, he added, were ready to sit down with Fernando to discuss the problem.

But the latter has yet to respond to their proposal, Trinidad said.

Trinidad said it was time for the MMDA to focus on its other duties, such as waste disposal.

He was supported by Manila Mayor Lito Atienza who stressed that the SC ruling justified the mayors' position that the MMDA should not intervene with local functions.

"MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando should concentrate on finding solutions to Metro Manila's garbage problem because the LGUs are now threatened with lawsuits for violating the Clean Air Act," Atienza said.

The mayor reiterated that while the LGUs are clothed with executive and legislative powers, the MMDA has only been authorized to plan the development of the metropolis.

"Fernando should just provide a development plan that we could all agree on instead of making things complicated for all the LGUs," Atienza said.

Hermenigildo San Miguel, director of the Makati Department of Public Safety (DPS), said Fernando should immediately request local government units in the metropolis to accredit MMDA traffic enforcers so they can continue apprehending erring motorists.

"In order to allay fears expressed by some quarters, the MMDA should immediately ask the cities and municipalities to deputize all MMDA traffic enforcers so they can continue their work," San Miguel's statement read.

The MMDA has almost 50 enforcers manning traffic along national thoroughfares within Makati such as Edsa, the South Superhighway and Gil Puyat Avenue, Salgado said.

San Miguel said that as soon as Fernando accepts the Makati government's offer, the MMDA's traffic enforcers are required to undergo a two-day training program which is mandatory for all DPS applicants.

The MMDA's enforcers must pass the training program, he added.

Major transport groups, meanwhile, urged the MMDA to abide by the SC ruling.

"In this war between the MMDA and the Mayors' Council League, it is the public transport sector that is caught in the middle and is suffering," said Zenaida Maranan, president of the Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association of the Philippines.

She said that based on the court decision, public utility drivers can now ignore the agency each time its enforcers issue a ticket for traffic violations.

Efren de Luna, president of the Philippine Confederation of Drivers and Operators-Alliance of Concerned Transport Organization, said there was no longer any reason for the MMDA to continue its operations.

The MMDA has vowed to appeal the court ruling. *With Margaux C. Ortiz and Clarissa S. Batino*

GMA to stay — on LRT tickets

By Clarissa S. Batino

WHILE THE METRO RAIL TRANsit 3 is trying to stay politically neutral, President Macapagal-Arroyo's picture will stay on tickets for Light Rail Transit (LRT) Lines 1 and 2.

The Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA), which supervises the operations of LRT Lines 1 and 2, has ordered about 370,000 new tickets bearing the face of the President which will be issued in the first quarter of 2006.

LRTA Administrator Mel Robles stressed that there was nothing wrong in putting the image of Ms Arroyo on the LRT tickets. "Nobody imposed that on us," he said, adding that the low fares for MRT and LRT Lines 1 and 2 were due to the President's efforts.

"She's doing her best to make the rail system affordable. She must be given credit," Robles said.

The printing cost for 250,000 of the 370,000 new tickets would be shouldered by the Land Bank of the Philippines, with the rest funded by the LRTA.

Robles said the LRTA's losses this year are expected to reach around P2 billion compared to P1.3 billion in 2004.

The losses would continue to mount unless Malacañang allows the agency to raise its fares by P10, a petition that has been pending since March 2003.

Although the proposed increase is not even enough to cover their operating expenses, it would help the agency cope with rising fuel and power costs, Robles added.

At present, the government subsidizes the fare of each LRT passenger by over P40, he added.

Robles, however, projected that for every P1 fare hike, they expect ridership to drop by about two percent.

During the holiday season, an average of 580,000 passengers rode on the LRT Lines 1 and 2 everyday. Of the total, 170,000 took the Line 2 which runs from Pasig to Manila. Line 1, on the other hand, traverses Rizal Avenue from Monumento to Baclaran.

P1-billion target for QC property taxes

By DJ Yap

QUEZON CITY EXPECTS TO SET A new record by hitting the P1-billion mark in its collection of real property taxes this year.

City Treasurer Victor Endriga reported that the collection for real estate taxes stood at P998 million as of Dec. 22, representing an increase of about P154 million or 18.37 percent.

On the other hand, the city's major source of income, business taxes, still constituted the bulk of the 2005 collection, contributing P2.6 billion to the city coffers.

Increases were also noted in other collections, such as transfer and amusement taxes, and regulatory or miscellaneous fees.

In his report to Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. last week, Endriga also revealed that the city posted a P242 million budget surplus as of Dec. 22. It was the fourth consecutive year that Quezon City registered a budget surplus.

The city collected P6.05 billion for the general fund, against the P5.8 billion budget approved for 2006.

Endriga said he expected the collection to reach P6.14 billion by the end of 2005.

ON their sixth trip to the Philippines, popular singing group The Stylistics—Harold Brown, Herb Murrell, Airrion Love and Van Field—pose for photographers at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport lounge yesterday. The group is in town for a two-day concert at the PICC. ROGER MARGALLO

They make you feel brand-new

By Nikko Dizon

LEGENDARY SOUL/R&B GROUP THE STYlistics always have an easy time in their Manila concerts, thanks to an enthusiastic and highly participative audience.

"We don't have to work too hard here because our Filipino audience sings right along with us," new member Harold "Eban" Brown told reporters in an interview yesterday.

The Stylistics, composed of original members Airrion Love and Herbie Murrell and new members Brown and tenor Van Fields, arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) from Tokyo via Japan Airlines flight JAL 741. The group is here for a special two-day pre-New Year concert produced by Viva Concerts and Events at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC).

Dubbed "The Greatest Hits Live," the concert will mark the sixth time that The Stylistics, one of the world's enduring singing groups, have returned to the Philippines.

"It was in the '70s when we first came here, during the time of President (Ferdinand) Marcos. That was so long ago," Murrell said. "And ever since, we've felt the Filipinos' love and support."

Love added that coming to the country is not only about performances but also about visiting the Filipinos they have made friends with throughout the years.

Four of the best local balladeers in the local music scene—Rico J. Puno, Marco Sison, Rey Valera, and Hajji Alejandro—will have back-to-back performances with The Stylisics in the concert which will be held tonight and tomorrow.

"Filipinos are known to be among the best musicians in the world. In our travels overseas for the past 30 years, we always see Filipino bands and they're excellent musicians," Murrell said.

The Stylistics was formed in Philadelphia in the late '60s and achieved worldwide recognition with their first album that set the standard for other soul/R&B artists for the next 30 years, a media statement released yesterday said.

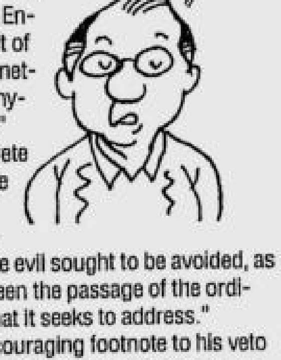
Among their hit songs are Betcha By Golly Wow, I'm Stone In Love With You, You'll Never Get to Heaven if You Break My Heart, and You Make Me Feel Brand New.

METROBRIEFS

How high is high?

QUEZON City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. has vetoed an ordinance banning owners of factories and businesses from putting up high concrete perimeter fences in front of their establishments. "It does not clearly define what the word 'high' means," Belmonte explained. He said that while he understood the rationale for the ordinance, which is to prevent businesses from hiding illicit and illegal activities, the proposal was incomplete.

"Neither does it set the standards for determining whether or not a particular fence is high enough so as to constitute a violation of the proposed ordinance," Belmonte added.


ANO'NG 'HIGH' BA YAN?

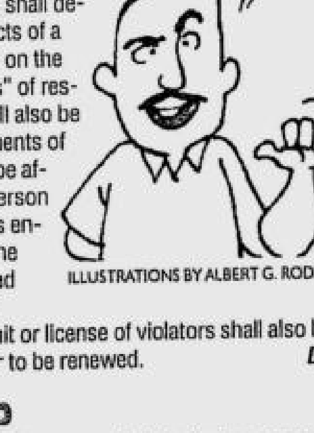
The ordinance was the offshoot of a recent raid conducted by the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency and the Department of Interior and Local Government which netted several kilos of metamphetamine hydrochloride, locally known as "shabu." The target of the raid had a high concrete perimeter fence that totally blocked the view from the outside. Belmonte, however, noted that the proposed ordinance "would not really eradicate the evil sought to be avoided, as there was no causal connection between the passage of the ordinance and the prevention of crimes that it seeks to address." Nonetheless, the mayor added an encouraging footnote to his veto message. With "proper refinement, including the setting down of standards," he said he was amenable to approving the proposed ordinance.

DJ Yap

Gambling casinos need QC dads' nod

QUEZON CITY councilors want a bigger say in gambling activities in the city. An ordinance requiring all gambling operations to seek the city council's approval prior to getting a business permit has been introduced recently by the councilors in response to reports that certain companies had been granted licenses to operate gambling enterprises like Internet casino in the city. Principally authored by Councilor Voltaire Godofredo Liban III, the ordinance prohibits the awarding of business permits or licenses to gambling ventures without express approval from the council. Before giving its approval, however, the council shall deliberate on the possible effects of a specific gambling operation on the "general welfare and morals" of residents. A public hearing shall also be conducted to get the sentiments of the community that would be affected by the activity. Any person or high official of a business entity found to have violated the ordinance shall be sentenced to one year in jail and fined P5,000. The business permit or license of violators shall also be immediately revoked, never to be renewed.

DJ Yap


DUMAAN MUNA SILA SA AMIN!

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALBERT G. RODRIGUEZ

Girl needs help

FOR 16-year-old Franselette Carreon, what started as a wound on the heel of her right foot is now the reason for a possibly unhappy new year. With the infection spreading to the bone, doctors at the St. Luke's Medical Center have recommended that Franselette undergo an operation, and possibly, plastic surgery. Her father Estillito, a taxi driver, is the sole breadwinner in the family. His monthly earnings of P3,000 is barely enough to provide for the needs of his family, much less the mounting medical bills. Franselette and her parents are appealing to kindhearted readers for financial help. Interested parties may contact them at 0916-6534719. Donations may also be sent directly through Landbank, account number 0626033423, c/o Charita D. Salandino.

CARREON

E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Ester G. Dipasupil

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Lit trees greet year of new hopes

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE 20-FOOT CHRISTMAS TREES stand conspicuously in a corner in Rizal Park, adorned with hundreds of colorful light bulbs and native fans. To the ordinary passerby, the trees may look no different from countless other symbols of the yuletide season which can be found on city streets.

But to the members of a foundation dedicated to discovering and showcasing the special talents and qualities of Filipinos, the trees represent their New Year's hope for a better country.

"The four trees symbolize the noble face and generous spirit of Filipinos which make nation-building projects possible," Galing Pilipino Movement (GPM) founder and president Erlinda de Guzman told the INQUIRER during the Light-A-Tree-For-Unity program at the San Lorenzo Ruiz quadrangle in Luneta (Rizal Park).

De Guzman explained that the special event was part of the movement's Pamaskong Galing Pilipino (PGP) 2005, a unique fundraising project for their year-long community building program.

The colors of the light bulbs stand for the five nation-building projects proposed by GPM: Yellow for Bisita Pilipinas, red for English Proficiency Scholarships for Public Teachers and Students, green for the Micro-Finance Fund for Community-based Enterprises, blue for the EduCorps fund, and white for caregiver centers and nursing homes for the elderly and abandoned children.

"Those interested in supporting a particular cause can sponsor a light bulb for P150 each," De Guzman said, adding that the PGP trees would be on display at the park from Dec. 16 to Jan. 2.

The fundraising project, she explained, was the result of a GPM-sponsored youth camp attended by selected student leaders nationwide last November.

"The youth leaders wanted to continue the movement's programs so we thought of a way to fund all these projects," De Guzman said.

Xavier Babista, a fifth year electrical engineering student at Adamson University, said they would start next year's Bisita Pilipinas program with the "Mabuhay March."

"The march will be the opposite of the Filipino World War II veterans' Death March," Babista said.

He added, "The activity will show that many of the Filipinos who participated in the Death March did not die for the Americans or the Japanese but for their own country."

The "Mabuhay March," which will be held from April 5 to 9, will retrace in reverse the route taken by Filipino war veterans, starting in Capas, Tarlac, passing through San Fernando, Pampanga and ending in Balanga, Bataan.

At each stopover, youth leaders and teams will organize activities that will emphasize "Galing Pilipino" practices and traditions in the area in terms of food, culture and history.

Education student AJ Gamba, another youth leader from the College of the Holy Spirit in Manila, said the other projects would focus on uncovering and enhancing the special gifts and talents of Filipinos from different communities nationwide.

"The English Proficiency Scholarship, for example, will address the urgent need for us to improve our communication skills so we could maintain our global competitive edge," Gamba said. The EduCorps program, on the other hand, would enable volunteer GPM members to serve as teachers and community workers for a year after graduation while micro-finance funding would pave the way for the success of community-based enterprises.

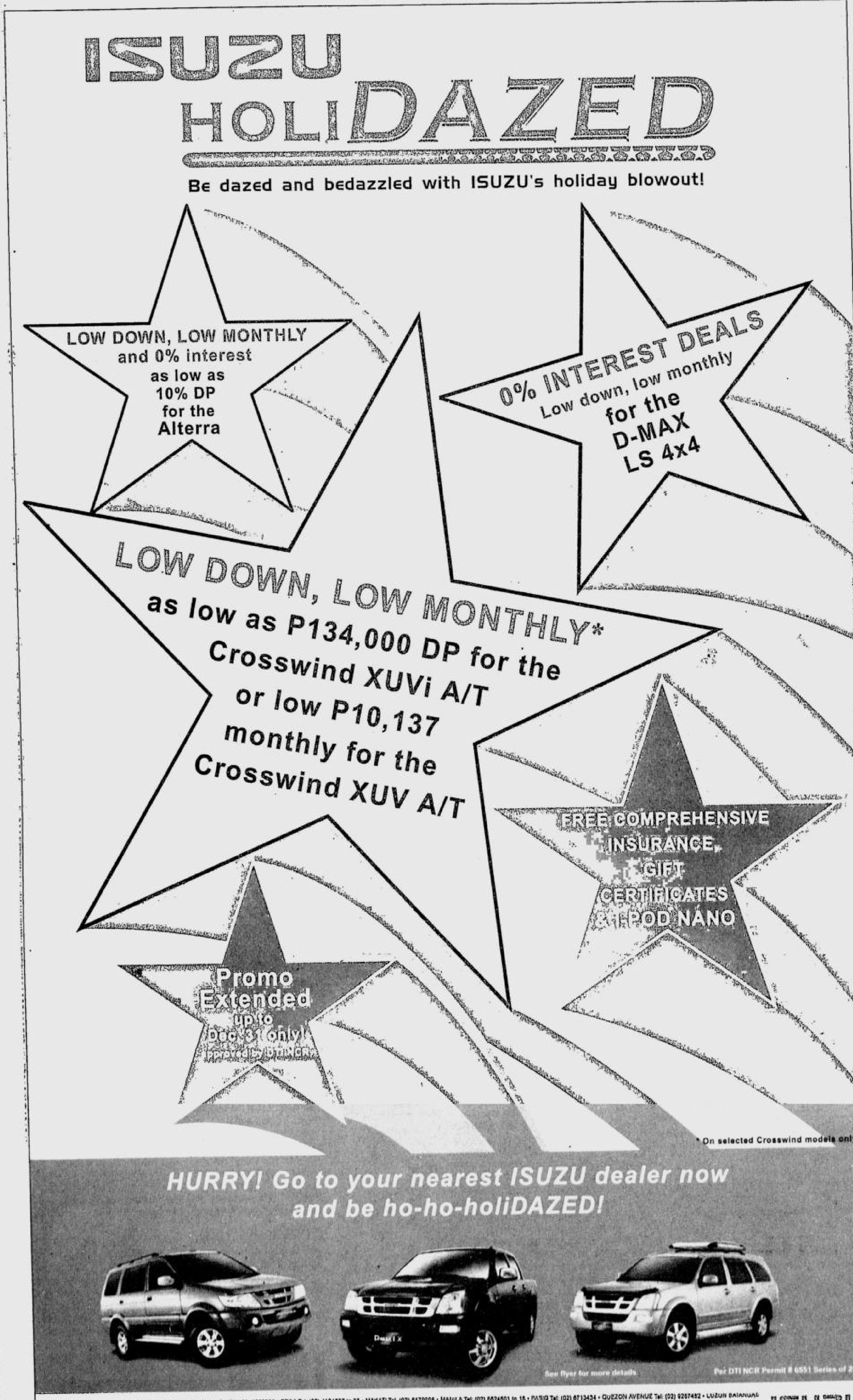
Babista said the last program would focus on creating employment opportunities for caregivers in the country by marketing the Philippines as a viable site for retirement and nursing homes. "Instead of sending our talented caregivers abroad, we will concentrate on improving health-related services in our country so those interested in employing our workers would come to the Philippines instead," he said.

Put together, all of these programs would place the Philippines in a more positive light, making it an enticing destination for tourists and a source of pride for locals, according to the student leaders.

"For us, the PGP trees are the fulfillment of our dreams for the Filipino people," Babista said. "We are happy that we can do our part in helping them realize their gifts and potentials."

Those who want to donate to the fundraising drive can call 633-1089.

EACH light on these gigantic Christmas trees in Rizal Park symbolizes the "noble spirit of Filipinos." ERIK ARAZAS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Traffic enforcers try a little kindness

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

EXPECT TRAFFIC ENFORCERS IN MANdaluyong City to be "a little lenient" for the remainder of the holidays.

"We have an informal order to our enforcers not to be strict with motorists who violate the five-hour window under the city's number coding scheme," Mayor Neptali Gonzales II said yesterday.

But the mayor, a vocal critic of Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chair Bayani Fernando, was quick to say that the order was not meant to jibe with the MMDA's lifting of its number coding scheme until Jan. 1.

"We decided to implement the plan in the spirit of Christmas," Gonzales said. Traffic enforcers, however, will again strictly enforce the five-hour time frame beginning on Jan. 2.

In a traffic ordinance passed six months ago, the Mandaluyong City council allowed cars banned from the streets under the number coding scheme to go on the road from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The ban would again be enforced outside these hours.

The truck ban will, however, continue to be enforced. Trucks are allowed to use Shaw Boulevard, Martinez Street, Boni Avenue, Kalentong Street, Ortigas Avenue, Nueve de Pebrero and Aglipay Streets from 6 -9 a.m. and from 5 - 9 p.m.

SPORTS

E-mail: pr_sports@inquirer.com.ph

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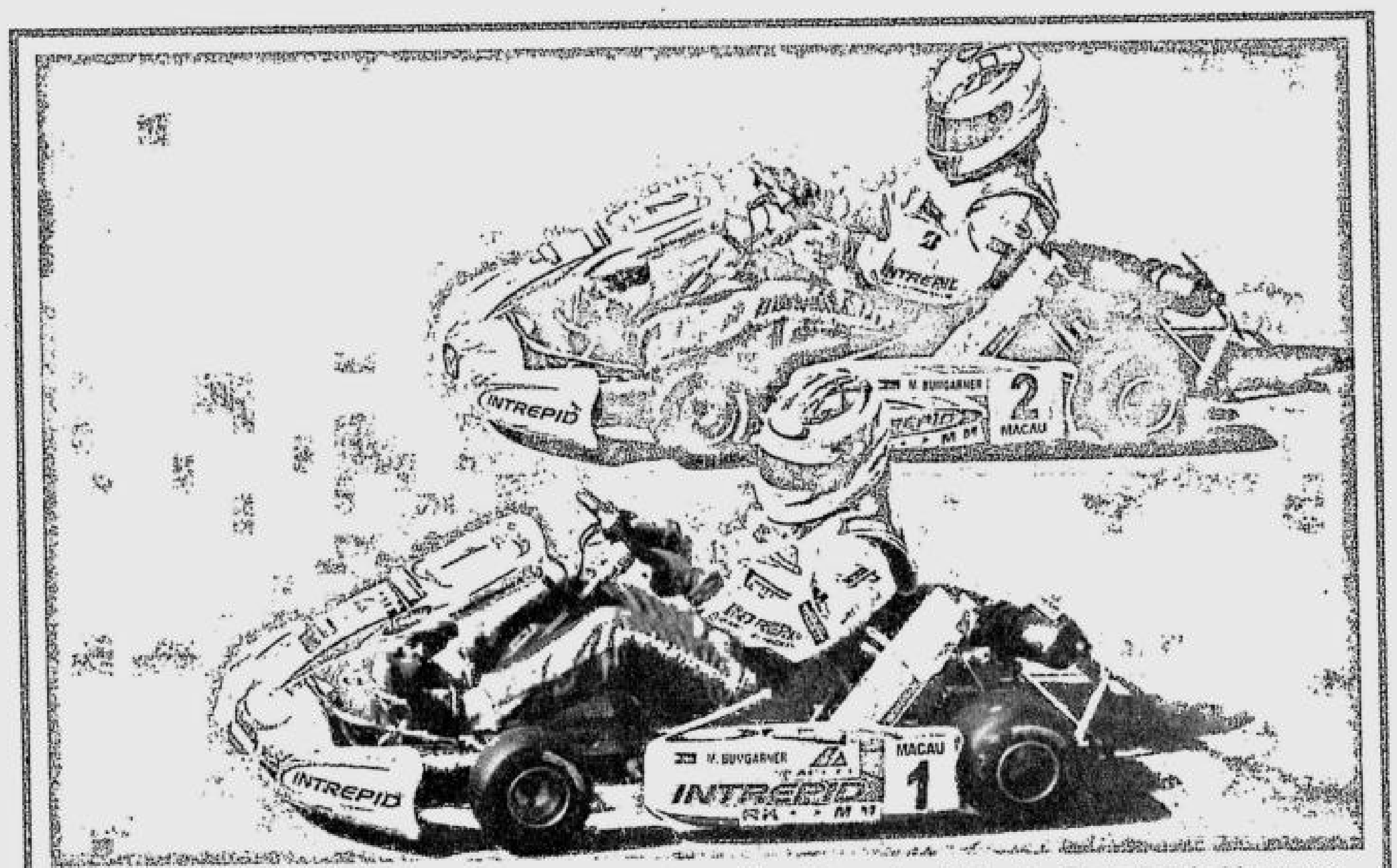


FILIPINO karter Michele Bumgarner (foreground) makes the traditional victory lap with brother Mark after the Macau race.

Michele keeps Asian crown

PHILIPPINE PRIDE MICHELE MARIE Bumgarner kept her Asian karting title for the third straight year with a third-place finish in the final leg of the 2005 Asian Karting Open Championship at the Kartrodomo de Coloane in Macau recently.

Bumgarner's fighting windup was enough to give her the overall crown in the premiere Intercon-A class and foil the title bid of her Indonesian rival Ryan Anthony Monoarfa.

Michele's younger brother Mark clinched third overall in the series that drew some of the region's finest karters.

With the overall title in jeopardy after a troubled start, the 16-year-old Bumgarner rallied from 11th place to secure the required podium finish, in the process setting the fastest lap of 47.32 seconds and impressing the huge crowd in Macau—Asia's motorsports capital.

Bumgarner's third Asian title win was a fitting follow up to her impressive campaign in the 2005 CIK-FIA Asia-Pacific ICA Championship at the Suzuka Circuit in Japan, where she also posted the fastest lap despite being the lone female entry in the field of 28 world-caliber karters.

"There were a lot of trying moments that almost forced us to give up," said Bumgarner, daughter of an American businessman and his Zambaleña wife.

"But I was determined to survive the odds."

Bumgarner, who is backed by Accel, Powerade, Malaysia Airlines, Oakley, Salon Prive, Gold's Gym and Bridgestone Karting Tires, started in pole position in the 25-lap final race.

. Despite topping both the qualifying and pre-final races, however, carburetor problems and two collisions pulled her back in the early laps.

As she negotiated the first corner, Bumgarner was bumped from behind by Yugi Kunimoto of Japan, causing her kart to slide sideways. Immediately after, the Filipino was hit anew, this time by Tin Sritrai of Thailand, sending her kart careening into the grass run-off area.

Bumgarner slipped to 11th place in the 24-kart field but was able to quickly regain her bearings and chase the leaders.

Kris Haase of Italy won the race with veteran Thai champion Suwapak Kouthong bagging runner-up honors.

Karters from the Netherlands, Japan, Italy, Hong Kong, China and Macau also competed in the final leg.

Mark Bumgarner started in 15th place after blowing an engine in the pre-final race. Much like his sister, he encountered problems at the first turn.

To avoid colliding with a kart that slid sideways in his path, Mark drove into a wall and wrecked his chassis.

Morales camp sees KO triumph this time

IT'S GOING TO BE LIGHTS OUT THIS TIME FOR MANNY Pacquiao.

MORALES

Going into their fifth week of spartan training, Erik "El Terrible" Morales and his team are predicting a knockout loss for Pacquiao when the Filipino hero and the Mexican cross paths anew on Jan. 21 in the main event of "The Battle" at the Thomas and Mack Center in Las Vegas.

The bold statement came Wednesday from Morales' conditioning coach Raul Robles, who was interviewed by the fight website Box-latino at the Queretaro mountains, where the Mexican star has been holed up for weeks to prepare for Pacquiao.

"This is their second meeting, and Erik's maturity will play a crucial role in his victory by knockout over Pacquiao," said Robles.

"I have total confidence that Erik will knock Pacquiao out this time around."

He said Morales learned a lot from his defeat to Zahir Raheem and would fight Pacquiao in a better psychological frame.

Morales won his first meeting with Pacquiao by unanimous decision last March in Las Vegas by wisely exploiting a nasty cut over the right eye that bothered the Filipino starting in the fifth round.

The two appeared on the same ring last September in Los Angeles with Pacquiao stopping Mexican Hector Velasquez in the sixth round and Morales losing by unanimous decision to Raheem.

Morales, who is now trained by Jose Luis Lopez, has hired Manuel Leyva and Mauro Gutiérrez as sparmates. The two fighters are deemed just as fast and strong as Pacquiao and are capable of applying the pressure on Morales during training.

Aside from the gym work, Morales also runs in the mountains and on the track.

The track sessions consist of the interval training being used by marathoners. It involves running 200 to 400 meters several times per session, twice a week.

The mountain runs, meanwhile, involve hitting the road in the 3,000-meter Queretaro range.

Pacquiao is himself preparing for the rematch in Los Angeles. He started training early this month under US trainer Freddie Roach. *Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor*

PSA to also fete top Para Games bets

MULTIPLE GOLD MEDAL WINNER SANDER Severino and members of the victorious Team Philippines in the 3rd ASEAN Para Games will share the limelight with the rest of the top sports achievers of 2005 who will be honored by the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) during its annual awards night on Jan. 14 at the Manila Pavilion.

Severino, a FIDE Master and former national kiddies champion, emerged the most bemedalled Filipino athlete in the week-long meet for the differently-abled, snaring five gold medals in the individual and team events to anchor the country's sixth place finish.

The effort of the Silay City, Negros Occidental, native put him in the company of the 21 other major awardees being feted by the country's oldest media organization made up of sportswriters from national broadsheets and tabloids.

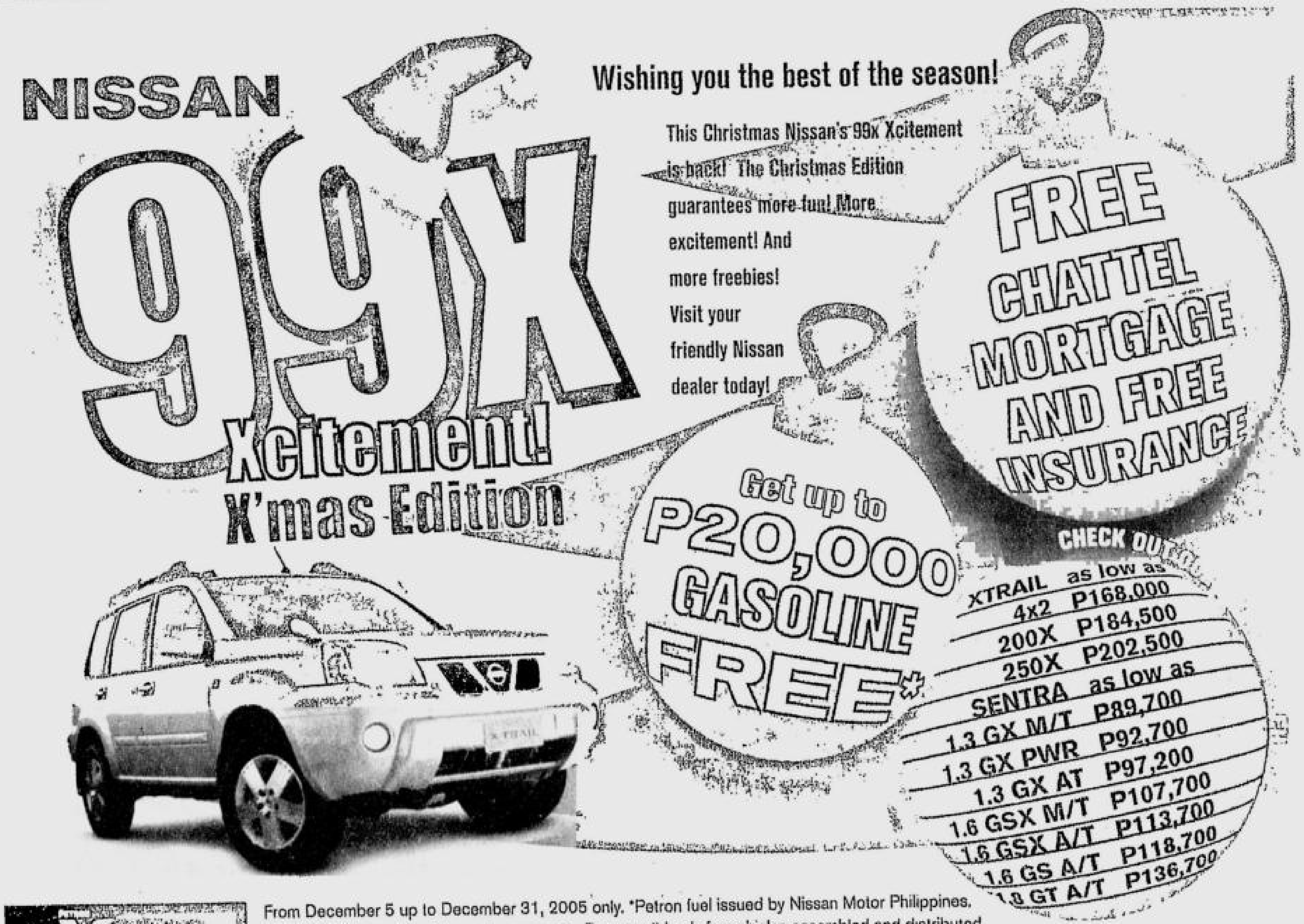
A citation, on the other hand, will be handed out to the entire Para Games RP contingent that bagged 22 gold, 41 silver and 37 bronze medals for its best-ever finish in the biennial meet.

"It is only fitting that we also recognize the honor which our differently-abled brothers had given to the country in the recent 3rd ASEAN Para Games," said PSA president Jimmy Cantor of Malaya.

Leading the honor roll list during the two-hour rite to be telecast on a delayed basis by NBN-4, sponsored by Red Bull and supported by the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC), San Miguel Corp., and Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, is Team Philippines, which has been named the PSA Athlete of the Year for its historic overall triumph in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

Making up the distinguished roster of major awardees are the multiple gold medal winners in the SEA Games and other sports figures who made their mark in their respective sports, including international stars Manny Pacquiao and

PSA/ A20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SPORTSWATCH

Romero-Salas tops Miata

DEFENDING CHAMPION JOSE LUIS ROMERO-Salas ruled both races in the Normally Aspirated division of the Miata Cup 2005 at the Subic International Raceway in Subic, Zambales, recently. Romero-Salas' victory punctuated the performance of the Bosch-TNT Express-Castrol which fielded an entire team in the series for the first time. Jenny Tan checked in sixth and fourth in races 9 and 10 to virtually clinch the series title.

PFF taps World Cup man

PHILIPPINE FOOTBALL FEDERATION PRESIDENT Johnny Romualdez has named football promoter Ed Formoso as overall coordinator in the local promotion of the 2006 Fifa World Cup, slated June 9 to July 9 in 12 cities in Germany. Although the World Cup rivals the Olympics in terms of interest in most countries, the Philippines remains largely unaffected and PFF wants to change that. "The PFF will seek ways and means to bring [the World Cup] closer to all Filipinos," said Formoso, who is also head of the PFF media bureau.

Roligon derby stakes P4M

ROLIGON MEGA COCKPIT WILL CELEBRATE ITS 16th anniversary with the staging of super 6-cock derby on Jan. 31, Feb. 2, 4, 7 and 9. A guaranteed prize of P4 million is at stake for an entry fee of only P11,000, with the fastest win champion getting a new Toyota Innova as bonus. Roligon owner Rolly Ligon said each participant may field an entry during the 2-cock elimination rounds on Jan. 31, Feb. 2 and 4. The 4-cock semifinals and finals are slated Feb. 7 and 9, respectively. For inquiries, call 851-2275, 833-1638 or 852-9812.

60 fights today in Las Piñas

AT LEAST 60 FIGHTS ARE ON TAP TODAY AS cockers and breeders from Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Parañaque, Pasay, Cavite, Laguna and Batangas compete in the annual LPC Noche Buena 3-Cock Derby at the Las Piñas Coliseum. Derby host Eddie Alejandro has invited some 40 upcoming derby entries. For submission of entries, call 873-1040 or 874-3910. The venue will also present its version of the popular Fastest Win One-Cock Ulutan, hosted by Alex Tobias, Big Boy and Paeng Arciaga of Muntinlupa, on Jan. 16 with P500,000 at stake for an entry fee of P2,200.

CL cockers join GCAP

PROMINENT COCKERS FROM CENTRAL LUZON and provincial hackfight veterans are among the new members of the San Juan Coliseum-based Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines (GCAP). They are Jun and Rudy Jingco, Jet Fernando, Alex Escalona, Mayor Dennis Pineda and Patrick Puno, as well as Tony Marfori of Davao, Jun Topacio of Cavite and Tito Reyes of Batangas. The GCAP has planned eight big derbies (5-cockers) at the San Juan Coliseum beginning Jan. 4. Exclusive sponsor is Sagupaan Complexor 3000. For inquiries, call 725-5369 or 0917-8041691.

STILL CAUTIOUS: Coach Koy Banal

Wizards tipped to barge into PBL finals first

By Jasmine W. Payo

IS THERE ANY REASON THE MAGNOLIA WIZARDS WON'T MAKE it to the Philippine Basketball League (PBL) finals?

Still two games ahead of their nearest rivals, pundits have pegged the league-leading Wizards already a shoo-in for the championship round of the Heroes' Cup. Yet coach Koy Banal believes that it doesn't always work that way.

GAMES JANUARY 7
(*San Andres Gym*)
2 p.m.—Harbour Centre vs Toyota Oils
4 p.m.—Magnolia vs Hapee-PCU

"In this league, nobody is sure who will be in the finals," said Banal, whose Wizards need to win just one of their remaining three games to gain an outright semifinal berth.

The cautious stance, perhaps, stems from their disappointing campaigns early this year. Although highly touted in the last two conferences, the Wizards failed to advance past the semifinal round.

The Montaña Jewels claimed the Open Championship title last February, while the Welcoat Paintmasters bagged the Unity Cup crown in June.

But Banal said that they need not go far beyond this conference to know how unpredictable games could go. After dispatching the league heavyweights, the Wizards took their first loss against rookie squad Far Eastern Insurance.

"I don't know what happened in that game," said Banal. "But I've been telling my players that, if we want to win the championship, we should have no back-to-back losses."

The Wizards responded to their mentor's challenge, pulling off wins in two tough games against Granny Goose (69-65) and Montaña (70-62).

But Banal said the performances remain far from his expectations.

"Everyone has been kind of tight," observed Banal. "I don't want to use the word complacent, but I think we're still rusty after the long break (during the SEA Games). Hopefully we'll do better soon."

ARWIND Santos (left) rem

Crack US entries expected for World Slasher Cup

A FORMIDABLE GROUP OF GAME-fowl master breeders from the United States is expected to grab top honors in the world's biggest cockfighting event, the World Slasher Cup Invitational 8-Cock Derby set Jan. 17, 19 and 21 at the Araneta Coliseum.

The Pintakasi of Champions, host of the bi-annual cockfest, said that Filipino cockers led by defending champions Boy Marzon and Matt Bitanga will have their hands full fielding their best breed of gamecocks against US entries.

Leading the American contingent are Roger Roberts of Georgia and Ray "Stingray" Alexander of Alabama. Roberts was World Slasher Cup Champion in 2001 while Alexander was the champion in 1994-95.

The American invasion also includes Jerry Ellard of Alabama, Bruce Barnett of California, Joe Sanford of California, Jesse Smith of Oklahoma, Johnny Moore of Tennessee, Brad Padgette of Oregon and Goi Goitia of California.

Dark horse challengers include entries of Peter Uren of Australia, Sedfrey Linsangan of Guam and Morinobu Taniguchi of Japan.

Incentives for SEAG coac

PSC prepares release of P9 million; Molina ment

By Musong R. Castillo

THE PHILIPPINE SPORTS COMMISSION WILL release a total of P9 million next week to cover the incentives for the national coaches who played key roles in the Philippines' overwhelming overall victory in the recent 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

The release of the cash incentives was somewhat delayed after the PSC failed to receive the certifications from the players on time.

The coaches' incentives were supposed to be handed out on the same day that the athletes received theirs last week.

Thus far, the PSC only has the certification of 106 coaches who helped the athletes in their preparation and during the SEAG, with 113 more waiting to be certified by their respective wards.

Only 358 out of the 471 athletes who landed medals in the SEAG have so far passed certifications to the PSC with Pinky Brosas, coach of swimmer Miguel Molina, the biggest earner of them all.

Under the law, a coach is entitled to receive the equivalent of 50 percent of his or her ward's windfall.

In the case of Brosas, he stands to ban P176,000 after Molina earned a total of P352,00 for winning three gold medals, a silver and

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ins a big offensive threat for the Wizards. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

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bronze in pool action in Los Baños, Laguna.

Rommel Kong, mentor of triple gold winner diver Shiela Mae Perez, is the next big earner with around P125,000 while traditional dragon boat mentors Nestor Ilagan and William Dequila will share the bounty of the team that swept the six gold medals staked in the event.

The coach of rower Benjamin Tolentino Jr., another triple-gold-medalist, also stands to receive substantial reward.

Following the incentive scheme, SEAG individual champions stand to receive P100,000 for each gold medal. Each silver medal is worth P50,000 while each bronze medal is worth P10,000.

Aquatics sked busy in Asiad runup

By Marc Anthony Reyes

IT'S GOING TO BE A BUSY YEAR for aquatics in the coming year.

A major source of gold medals for the country in the recent Southeast Asian Games, the once-troubled Philippine Amateur Swimming Association (Pasa) plans to send its top talents to 10 international competitions and to hire top-notch foreign coaches next year.

Pasa president Mark Joseph said the synchronized swimming, open water and masters swimming programs would be launched by mid-year, aside from clinics and camps on swimming, diving and water polo.

"We are hoping to have Croatian and Russian coaches run the camps and clinics," said Joseph, whose election as swim head last year finally ended the long leadership squabble that set back the progress of the sport.

Aquatics produced nine golds—five in diving and four in swimming—to help power the country to the SEAG overall crown.

The Filipino swimmers will kick off the year with a stint in the prestigious First Japan Open championships in Tokyo in February, a prelude to the Asian championships slated in Singapore the following month.

The RP tankers will also take part in the world shortcourse swimming championships in Shanghai in April, before Pasa's young prospects take part in the Southeast Asian age group in Jakarta in June.

Also in the RP schedule is the SEA inter-school championships, also set in June in Malaysia, which will also host the World Youth diving championships a month later. In August, the country hopes to make a breakthrough performance in the Fina youth championships in Brazil.

The Philippines also gets to host an international event when the Asian interclub water polo championship is held in September at the Trace Aquatics Center in Los Baños, Laguna.

A stint in the Pan Pacific swimming championship in vancouver, Canada, also awaits the tankers in September before they see action in the Asian Games in Doha, Qatar, in December.

Joseph said the Pasa would also hold a talent identification program and create a membership database to broaden its talent base, sponsor coaches education and certification, and launch short course (25-meter) competitions.

RP SPEARHEAD Miguel Molina churns his way to the gold medal in the 200-meter breaststroke finals in the recent Southeast Asian Games. He is expected to lead the RP team again to several overseas meets in 2006. AP

PSA to also fete top Para Games bets

From page A19

Jennifer Rosales.

San Miguel Corp., whose P100 million contribution to the First Gentleman Foundation helped cover the training expenses of the SEAG-bound athletes, are on top of the different entities and personalities which will be accorded citations during the awards night.

Young golfers Wolen Superal and Miguel Tabuena are this year's recipient of the Antonio M. Siddayao awards given to young and promising sports figures, while the Philippine Dragon Boat Federation is the hands-down choice as the Most Outstanding National Sports Association (NSA) after completing a six-gold sweep of all its events in the SEA Games.

The list of awardees:

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR—Team Philippines

MAJOR AWARDEES—Alex Pagulayan (billiards), Manny Pacquiao (pro boxing), Arwind Santos (amateur basketball), Eric Menk (pro basketball), Jennifer Rosales (women's golf), Juvic Pagunsan (amateur golf), Harry Tanamor (amateur boxing), Maristela Torres (athletics), Amaya Paz (archery), Miguel Molina (swimming), Sheila Mae Perez (diving), Benjamin Tolentino (rowing), John Baylon (judo), Cecil Mamiit (tennis), Suhod Hakim, (traditional boat racing), Ruperto Aabijon (TBR), Manuel Maya (TBR), Junray Dayumad (TBR), Ricky Sardena (TBR),Rene Catalan (wushu)

SPECIAL CITATIONS: All Filipino gold medalists in the 23rd SEA Games CITATIONS: San Miguel Corp., First Gentleman Foundation, grandmaster Mark Paragua, golfer Jayvie Agojo, Manila Sports Council, JVC, boxer Brian Viloria, former POC president Celso Dayrit, PSC chair Butch Ramirez, Asian Formula 3, V-League, boxer Boom Boom Bautista, practical shooter Jag Lejano, Eddie Torres, Erlina Pecante, the Philippine Practical Shooting team and equestrienne Toni Leviste.

SPECIAL AWARD: Joseph Dumuk

ANTONIO M. SIDDAYAO AWARD: Wolen Superal, Miguel Tabuena

MOST OUTSTANDING NSA: Philippine Dragon Boat Federation

Marcelo rules Speedfest final leg, keeps Enduro title

JIMBOY MARCELO CAPPED HIS TITLE ROMP IN THE Enduro King class with a superb victory in the final leg of the Red Horse Beer-Smart Buddy Speedfest Motocross Championship at Sta. Lucia's Palo Alto course in Baras, Rizal, to put away the overall crown for the second year in a row.

Marcelo, winner of the national mini class title three years ago at the age of 14 and support rider for Rudy Project-Castrol-Kawasaki racing in the Nationals, clinched the overall title in the penultimate round held in Subic, Olongapo, last month.

The 17-year-old pride of Valenzuela City stamped his class by topping both heats of the Enduro class before finishing second overall in the Ultimate Expert 125 class and third overall in the Expert Open of the series organized by Mike Potenciano of MP Turbo/Speed.

Marcelo's twin victory duplicated his feat last year. He will go one notch better if he wins the Enduro Open overall championship of the Cebu Boardwalk Motocross Series, where he is one of the favorites, in January.

Marcelo is backed by Rudy Project, Castrol, Triumph JT Marketing's HJC Helmets, Bridgestone, GCG Pipes, Powerade, Viva Mineral Water, Waterfront Hotel, Cebu Pacific, Outdrive and Kawasaki.

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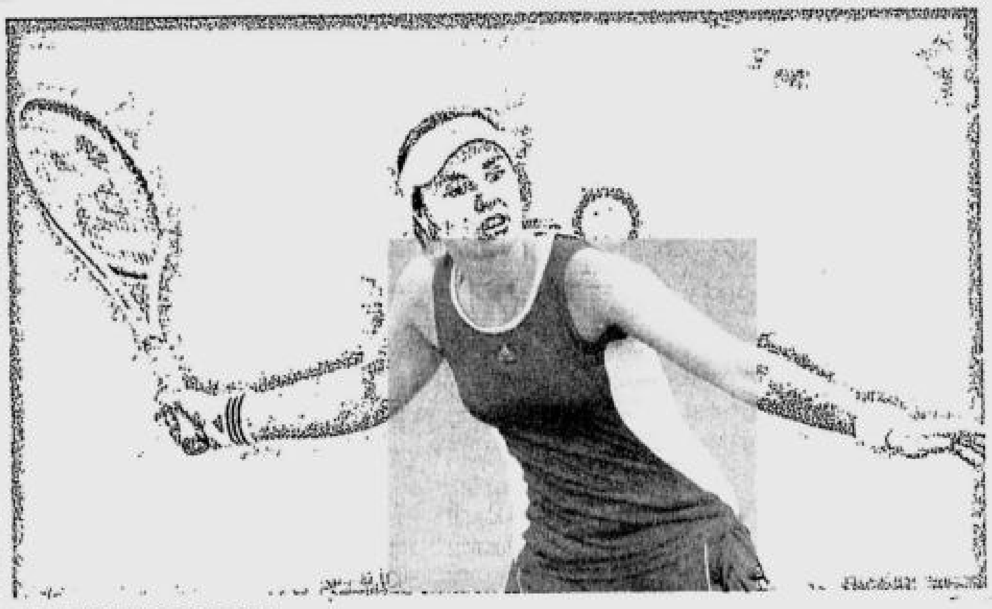


COMEBACK TRAIL

Former world No. 1 tennis champion Martina Hingis watches the ball during a practice session on the Gold Coast, Australia, Wednesday. Hingis will take part in her first professional tour match since she retired three years ago from foot, heel and ankle injuries when she takes part in the Australian Women's Hardcourt tennis tournament on Queensland's Gold Coast starting Jan. 1. AP

SEAG SCANDAL

Two more Vietnam booters arrested for fixing matches

HANOI, VIETNAM—TWO MORE PLAYERS from Vietnam's national soccer team were arrested Wednesday for alleged match-fixing during the Southeast Asian Games in the Philippines last month, police said.

Midfielder Huynh Quoc Anh and defender Le Bat Hieu were taken into custody Wednesday afternoon, said an official at the Ministry of Public Security on customary condition of anonymity. The two are being held at a prison outside Hanoi.

Their arrests came a week after two other team members, striker Pham Van Quyen and midfielder Le Quoc Vuong, were arrested on the same charges.

Online newspaper VNExpress quoted Vuong as telling police that Anh and Hieu were given 20 million dong ($1,260) each for helping fix the match against Myanmar, in which Vietnam won, 1-0. The players were allegedly paid by a local betting ring for agreeing to ensure that their team won by only one goal.

The money was paid when the players were on transit in Ho Chi Minh City after returning from the Philippines earlier this month, the newspaper said. Three other players on the team have also been questioned by police for their alleged involvement.

The latest arrests were another embarrassment for Vietnam's soccer, which has been plagued by corruption and match-fixing scandals in recent years. Nearly two dozen players, referees and sports officials face criminal charges from other incidents in the past year.

Earlier this week, the No. 2 official of the Vietnam Football Federation, vice president Le The Tho, resigned under pressure after being criticized for failing to stop the players from fixing the match. *AP*

Nets halt Cavaliers' run

EAST RUTHERFORD, NEW JERSEY—RICHARD Jefferson poured in 28 points and Vince Carter added 21 points and nine rebounds to lead the surging New Jersey Nets to a 96-91 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers on Tuesday.

Jason Kidd flirted with a triple-double hitting for 14 points, nine assists and nine rebounds and Nenad Krstic contributed 13 points and eight boards to the New Jersey effort, which has won seven straight games.

Cleveland's LeBron James continued his superb play, finishing with a game-high 31 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists while Zydrunas Ilgauskas added 21 points.

However, neither effort was rewarded with a victory as the in-form Cavaliers absorbed their first defeat in seven games.

Leading by 18 points heading into the final quarter, the Nets and their supporters appeared headed for a comfortable win until the Cavaliers went on a 12-0 run to cut the deficit to 89-83.

The Nets responded with four points to re-establish a 10-point cushion but the Cavaliers refused to fold, James and Larry Hughes hitting three-pointers to pull to within, 93-89.

Cleveland, however, would get no closer, with Kidd and Carter hitting clutch free throws in the final seconds to seal the decision.

In Auburn Hills, Richard Hamilton scored 24 points and Chauncey Billups added 21 points and 13 assists as the streaking Detroit Pistons disposed of the Toronto Raptors, 113-106, to collect their eighth straight win.

Tayshaun Prince chipped in with 18 points as the Pistons won for the 14th time in 15 games, improving their record to a sparkling 23-3.

In San Antonio, Tony Parker netted 27 points and dished out six assists while Tim Duncan added 26 points and nine rebounds as the Spurs eased past the Indiana Pacers, 99-86.

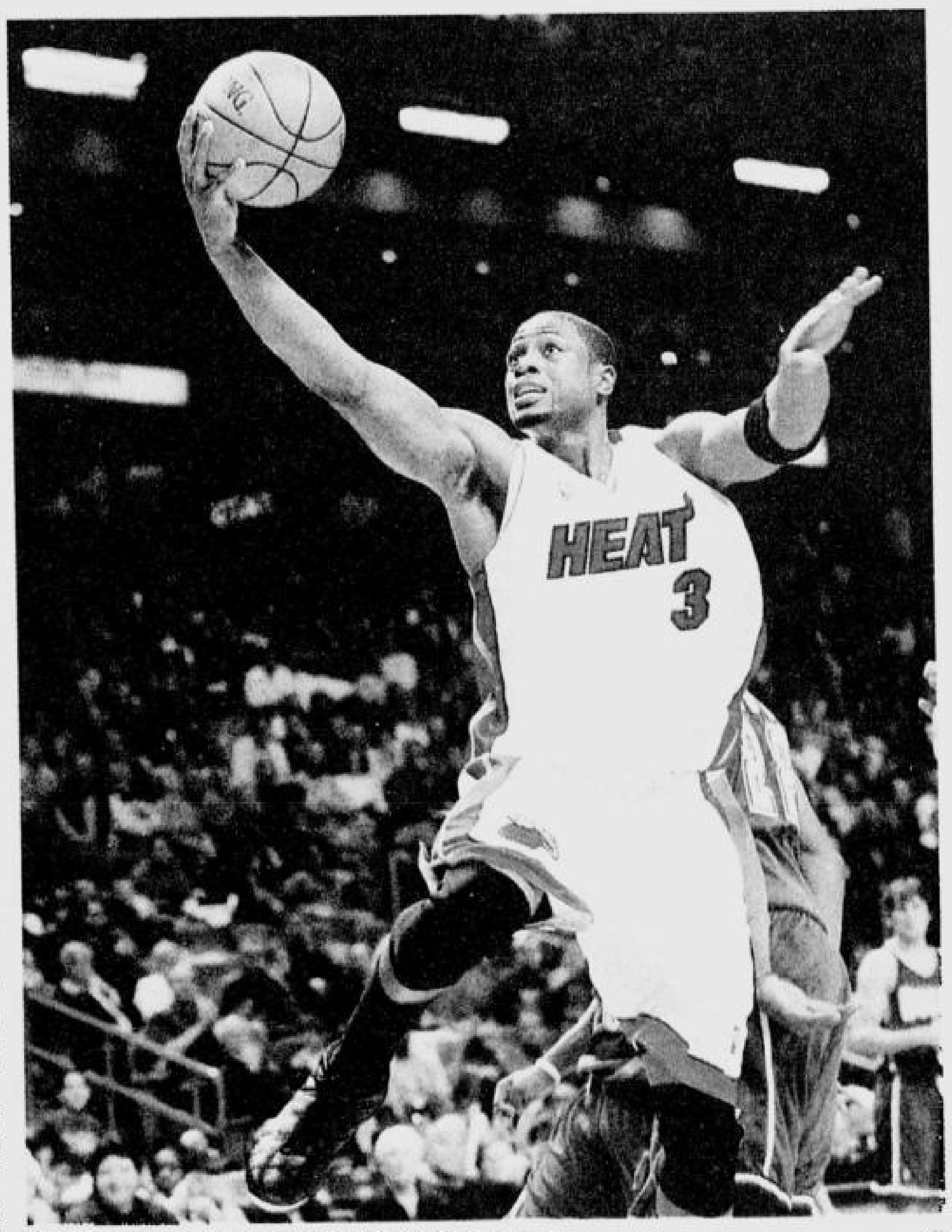
In Miami, Dwyane Wade nailed a game-high 35 points and Shaquille O'Neal added 23 points and grabbed eight rebounds powering the Heat to a 109-98 decision over the Milwaukee Bucks and their seventh win in nine games.

In Houston, Mehmet Okur scored 20 points and pulled down 17 rebounds sparking the Utah Jazz to an 82-74 triumph over the Rockets, who played half the game without Tracy McGrady.

In Atlanta, Brevin Knight scored 22 points and Keith Bogans and Bernard Robinson each chipped in with 13 helping the Charlotte Bobcats to a 93-90 win over the Hawks.

In Denver, Allen Iverson hit for 36 points, including the game-winning jumper with four seconds left to play, to earn the Philadelphia 76ers a 108-106 decision over the Nuggets.

In Los Angeles, Mike Bibby scored a season-best 38 points and dished out 10 assists as the Sacramento Kings trimmed the Clippers, 110-93, to snap a five-game losing streak. *Reuters*



MIAMI Heat star Dwyane Wade stretches for a lay-up. AFP

Bird feels betrayed by Artest's actions

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA—INDIANA PACERS president Larry Bird says he felt "betrayed" and "disappointed" by the actions of his All-Star forward Ron Artest.

"I think enough is enough," Bird told the Indianapolis Star newspaper. "I think Ronnie will do fine, but not here."

One of the Pacers best players, Artest also is one of the National Basketball Association's most controversial personalities.

The 26-year-old was placed on the inactive list by the Pacers earlier this month and was subsequently fined $10,000 by the league for publicly requesting a trade.

Bird, who spent the last 10 days on a scouting trip in Europe, finally disclosed his disappointment with Artest.

"I don't know if this is the right wording, but I felt betrayed," Bird said. "We're disappointed. Things happen, maybe it's a good thing. We're in a situation where we have to move on."

Bird went on to criticize Artest, who recently complained about the size of his role in the Pacers' offense.

"He was clearly frustrated," Bird said. "Ronnie thinks if we lose, we would have won the game if he had the ball every time.

"The offense bogs down at times, but it's still a great offense. He held the ball a lot of times. Nothing frustrated me more than him not rebounding, but I didn't go out in the public and say anything."

Indiana, which is 5-3 since placing Artest on the inactive list, would prefer to trade its disgruntled star to the Western Conference, but ultimately will do whatever it takes to unload him.

"Any time you deal a player, you would like him to go out of the conference," Bird said. "We're looking at the West, but if it's the East, that's how it's going to be."

Last season, Artest was suspended 75 games—the longest non-drug ban in NBA history—for his major role in the brawl with fans at The Palace of Auburn Hills on Nov. 19, 2004.

"I don't know what goes on in Ronnie's world when he leaves (Conseco Fieldhouse)," Bird said.

In the 2002-03 season, Artest was suspended for instigating an altercation with Miami Heat coach Pat Riley and fined and suspended for smashing a TV camera after a game at the Madison Square Garden.

He also got into a shoving match with a Pacers official after a postseason loss. *AFP*

Bitoon trails GM in Singapore Masters chess

Individual Standings after round 5:

OPEN SECTION

5.0-GM Zurab Azmaiparashvili (Georgia); 4.0-IM Richard Bitoon (Philippines); GM Zhang Zhong (China); GM Ni Hua (China); GM Humpy Koneru (India); GM Victor Mikhalevski (Israel); Tu Hoang Thai (Vietnam); 3.5-GM Mark Paragua (Philippines); GM Nelson Mariano II (Philippines); 3.5-GM Wu Shaobin (Singapore); IM Jayson Gonzales (Philippines); IM Oliver Dimakiling (Philippines); IM Gur Mittleman (Israel); IM Ashot Nadanian (Armenia); IM Salor Sitanggang (Indonesia); 3.5-NM Darwin Laylo (Philippines)

CHALLENGERS

5.0-Dr. Alfredo Paez (Philippines); Rustum Tolentino (Philippines); 4.0-Dr. Jenny Mayor (Philippines); Rodolfo Panopio Jr. (Philippines); Leo Daylo Jr. (Philippines); Boy T (Indonesia); Wilman Endey (Indonesia); Kia Tan (Singapore); Ashot Kadam (Singapore); 3.5-Michael Adario (Philippines)

SINGAPORE—FILIPINO INTERNATIONAL master Richard Bitoon drew with compatriot Grandmaster Nelson Mariano II in just 15 moves of a Sicilian Defense Wednesday to boost his chances in the 2005 Singapore Masters and Challengers International Open Chess Championships at the Hotel Royal in Newton Road here.

Bitoon climbed to 4.0 points after five rounds, just a point off solo leader Super GM Zurab Azmaiparahvili of Georgia and good for a share of second place with Chinese GMs Zhang Zhong and Ni Hua, former world junior women champion GM Humpy Koneru of India, GM Victor Mikhalevski of Israel and Tu Hoang Thai of Vietnam.

Mariano was at 3.5 points in the company of countrymen GM Mark Paragua, GM-candidate Jayson Gonzales, IM Oliver Dimakiling and NM Darwin Laylo; GM Wu Shaobin of Singapore, IM Gur Mittleman of Israel, IM Ashot Nadanian of Armenia and IM Salor Sitanggang of Indonesia. *NM Marlon Bernardino*

People

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

A SEND-OFF DINNER LAST NIGHT WAS held at the cool residence of Dante and Ching Fernandez in SSS Village, Marikina City, for people close to me. With your indulgence, they take center stage today.

Tomorrow, Dec. 30, Bonnie F. Juvida and his son, Jay, will leave for San Francisco and join the flock of Filipino immigrants in the land of so-called milk and honey. Father and son will link up with the missus, Flor, and Jay's brother (Don Don) and sister (Princess) in the City by the Bay; they've been away nearly 15 years.

I will miss Bonnie and Jay, whom I have shared many happy moments with, both on special occasions and in just simple get-togethers or mere home visits of minor consequences. Bonnie is the master carpenter I had learned so much from, particularly on how to properly hold the saw and hammer. As you know, I love to do a bit of carpentry, fixing a chair's shaky arm rest or straightening a table's unsteady leg once in a while. When I couldn't write, or couldn't craft a column here, I do some nailing and sawing when not tending the garden till the juices start dripping. Most times, the juices would trigger the itch to write.

Jay, who had been to Japan on a special grant to study advanced computer/chips technology, was responsible for setting up my sound system at home. The music from my workshop each time I try to produce what my Insan Taby Tabaniag would describe as "an alleged column," I credit it to the genius of Jay Juvida.

Here's wishing you all the best, guys.

A dear doll, Ofel J. Magturo, is also set to leave for America on Saturday, Dec. 31. No, she's not migrating. She's merely going back to Tustin City, Orange County in California, to rejoin her family and spend the New Year revelry there together. Ofel's been here for almost three months and, while here, she has nothing but praise for the land of her birth. She could not stop drooling over the quite "relaxed way you run your lives here." Having been away more than 30 years, Ofel says she's so glad to still see us "laughing, smiling seemingly all the time as if you don't have any serious problems at all."

Ofel also says she finds delight in my job, giving special attention to what she describes "as the seeming ease with which you go about accomplishing your job."

Oh, if she only knew I'd gut it out for every column churned out here.

But indeed, my work ethic is deceiving. Most people tend to be deceived.

I look relaxed most of the time, if not all of the time?

I have a secret for that. And since it's a secret, it will remain that way—at least, for now.

Like many *balikbayans*, who dream of one day coming home to good, ole Philippines for good, Ofel is no exception.

"When the right time comes, I'll be home for good," Ofel said one night last week. "The Philippines is in the heart."

Bon voyage and ciao!

***

FASTBREAK. It is also the season of weddings. Ger & Tere finally became Mr. & Mrs. Gerard M. Causon on Dec. 13 after being sweethearts for seven years. Who said it couldn't be done anymore, that living-in has totally eliminated lengthened boy-girl relationships? …Today also, Chin Chin and Francine will tie the knot at 6:30 p.m. at the Queen Of Peace Church in Bacolod City. The only son of my esteemed golfmate Ramon and May Uy, Chin Chin has been handpicked to continue Ramon's fine tradition of inventing shredders designed to help keep our environment friendly through a scientific waste management disposal system augmented by shredders. Best wishes!

***

Comments to menju@pldtdsl.net

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

Text us your feedback: inquirer ent name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

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The top 3
METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL

Fantasy flicks rule!

By Marinel R. Cruz

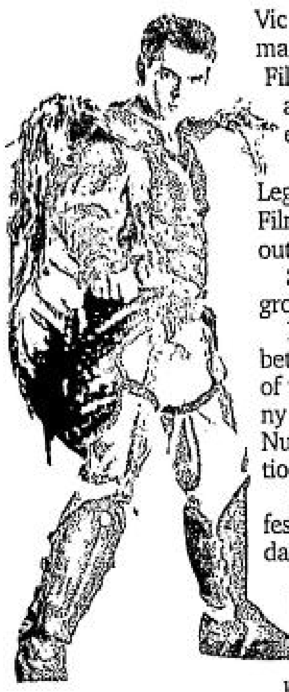
"ENTENG KABISOTE," STARRING COMEDIAN Vic Sotto, was the box-office champ on Christmas Day, when seven of the 10 Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF) entries opened in theaters, according to an official of the MMFF executive committee.

"Enteng Kabisote 2 Okay Ka Fairy Ko, the Legend Continues" is co-produced by OctoArts Films and M-Zet Films, Sotto's own production outfit.

Sotto's starrers have been MMFF's top grossers in the last three years.

It was a neck-and-neck fight on opening day between "Enteng" and Imus Productions' "Tale of the Enchanted Kingdom: Exodus," said Manny Nuqui of the MMFF executive committee. Nuqui is also the president of the Philippine Motion Pictures Producers Association.

Latest figures from the MMFF execom put the festival's nationwide total gross for the first two days at P101,564,854.



"MULAWIN" in third place

"EXODUS" is runner-up

Record-breaking

Erik Mati's "Exodus" claims the record for the Filipino film with the biggest number of computer-generated images (CGIs). The film stars Ramon "Bong" Revilla as the hero Exodus battling to save mankind from evil.

"Mulawin," directed by Dominic Zapata and Mark Reyes, is in third place, said Nuqui.

"Mulawin," a story of half-bird-half-man warriors, first aired on TV in August 2005. It launched the love team of Richard Gutierrez and Angel Locsin, who play the lead characters Aguiluz and Alwina, respectively.

The movie is co-produced by GMA Network Films and Regal Entertainment.

According to a text message quoting Nuqui, "Enteng Kabisote" earned P31 million, "Exodus," P21 million and "Mulawin," P19 million, from Dec. 25 to 26. The message was sent to INQUIRER Entertainment by the Manila Broadcasting Co. (MBC), co-producer of this year's MMFF.

An MMFF execom member who requested anonymity said the seven entries earned a total of P57 million on the first day. The official noted, "that's 25 percent higher than the first-day grosses (P48 million) in 2004—which makes this year a record breaker."

"ENTENG Kabisote" on top

First-day earnings up by 25 percent from that of last year

Nuqui was tight-lipped on how the other four films in the first batch of entries—three more will open on Jan. 1—fared in the first two days. But the MMFF execom member said Regal Entertainment's horror trilogy, "Shake, Rattle and Roll: 6" placed fourth and that Joel Lamangan's "Ako Legal Wife," (also from Regal) a chick flick about a housewife out to outwit her rich Chinese husband's two mistresses, was fifth.

He said Jose Javier Reyes' thriller, "Kutob," from Canary Films, was in sixth place, and Val Iglesias' "Terrorist Hunter," from industry newcomer Double Impact Films, was in seventh.

Race not over

"The race is not yet over," said "Exodus"

FANTASY/ A2-6

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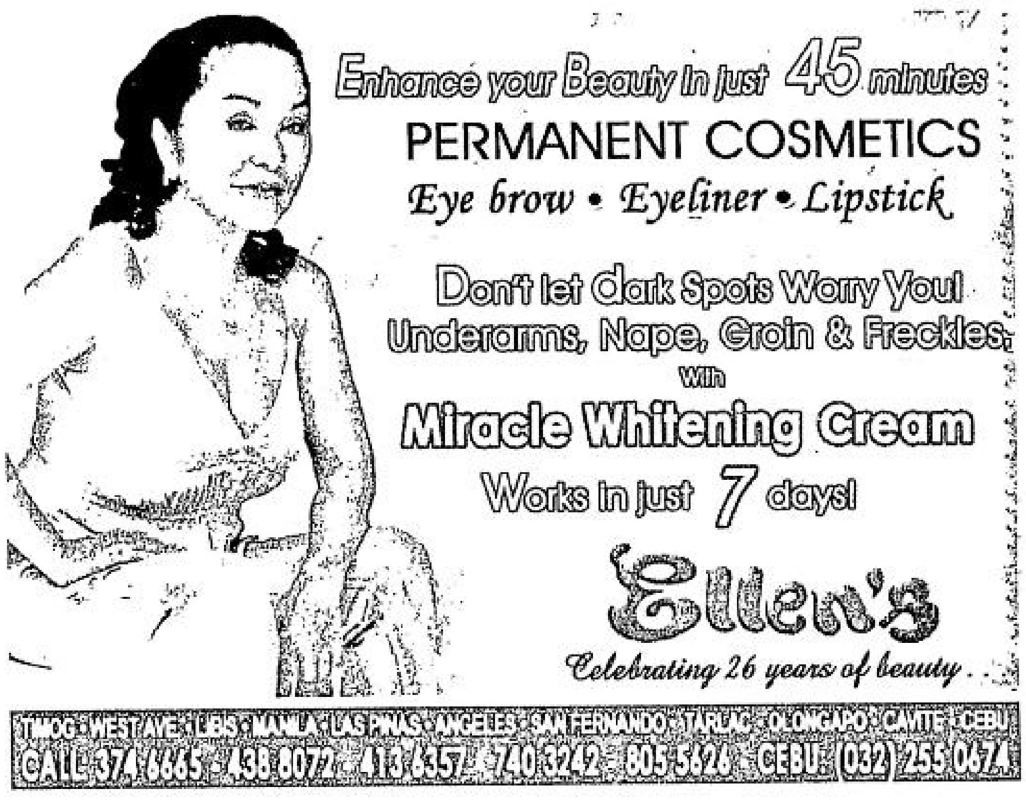

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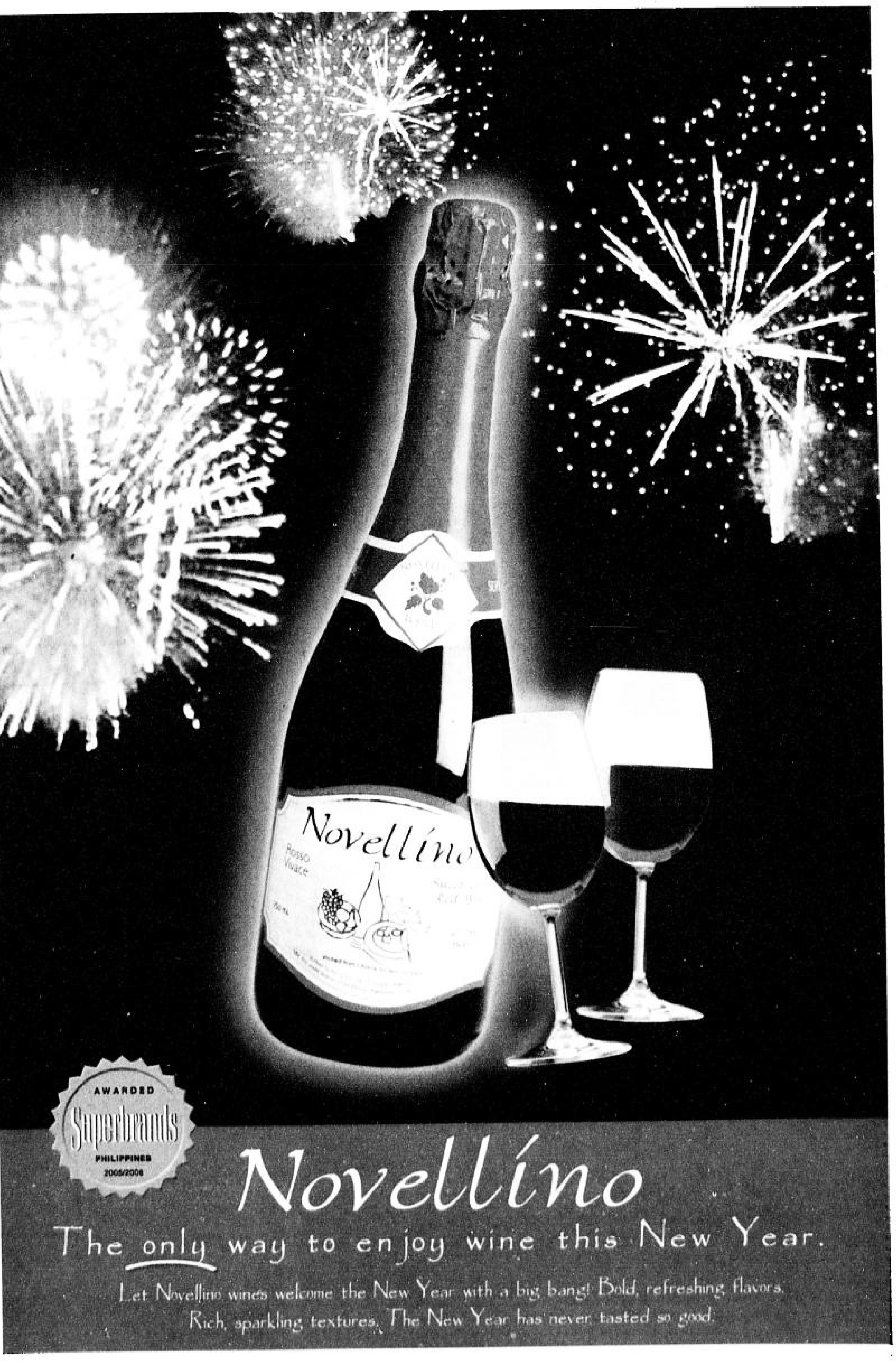

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VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

HOST: IS IT TRUE THAT THE NEW CHIEF Justice of the Supreme Court won't be occupying that position for more than a year before he retires?

Guest: I also heard, but that's not really unusual. Other Chief Justices served for only some months. The shortest Chief Justice to serve in the Supreme Court was Pedro Yap!

(The shortest Chief Justice? Exactly how tall or short was he—?!)

***

Host: Why do you like buying this brand of cosmetics? It's so expensive!

Guest: I know, but I want only the best. It's the most favorite brand of the most valuable women in the world!

(What makes them so—valuable?)

***

Host: After being a bachelor for so long, what made you decide to propose and get married now?

Guest: Because my fiancee is a really special girl! You may look and look for years and not find, but when you see the one meant for you, you know right away that you have choosen the right partner!

(Yes, but we're not so sure that she's "choosen" the right man for *her*!)

***

Host: What is lacking in your life now? You seem to have everything...

Guest: Oh, there's always something more. You cannot find it, I cannot find it, because it is missing!

(How—profound?)

***

Host: How come the celebrity pair did not win in the dance competition?

Guest: *Kasi*, although she was OK, he was *nahihirapan sa* steppings.

(*Ay, nahihirapan sa* steppings!)

***

Host: How important are your friends to you?

Guest: Oh, so important! They're always around even if they aren't around. You know? Friends, we always communicate each other!

(Promise, *ha*?)

***

Host: How do you keep calm in a very tough competition, with so much at stake?

Guest: You just have faith in yourself—and before you compete, you just take a deep breathe!

(A deep—what?)

***

Host: So, how would you rate your performance in the contest?

Guest: Honestly, I think it was a good overwhole performance!

(*Ay*, good overwhole performance!)

***

Host: What are the long-term effects of a major natural disaster?

Guest: Oh, very big. One major flash flood, it will take five years to recover it!

(*Ano daw*?)

***

Host: What do you do when somebody invites you in public?

Guest: Most of the time, I just ignore. But, if it's too much, I fight back. I'll don't wanna take it sitting down *naman, no*?)

(Ah, control yourself—and your tenses—please!)

***

Host: In your fight, was there physical violence involved?

Guest: Yes, *hinawakan nila ako sa dalawang buhok ko*!

(That must have—hurt?)

***

Host: How do you feel when a girl says you're her crush?

Guest: *Siyempre*, pattered!

(—So much for crushes!)

'Songs Rediscovered'

Award-winning singer **Jed Madela** comes on strong in "Songs Rediscovered." The repackaged album now has a bonus A-VCD that contains four new tracks and two music videos.

'Fun with Dick and Jane'

Ace comedian **Jim Carrey** and **Tea Leoni** topbill the remake of "Fun with Dick and Jane." In the movie, Carrey's years of hardwork finally pay off when he's promoted to vice president. But his glee turns to gloom when the company he works for is hit by an Enron-like calamity.

Taking his cue from his corrupt boss, Dick turns larcenous. Along with his wife, he exacts hilarious revenge and teaches Big Business a lesson.

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ENTENG KABISOTE: THE LEGEND CONTINUES GP 12:50,3:10,5:30, 7:50,10:10	SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K4 PG13 12:45,3:05,5:25, 7:45,10:05	EXODUS: TALES FROM THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM GP 12:40,3:00,5:20, 7:40,10:00

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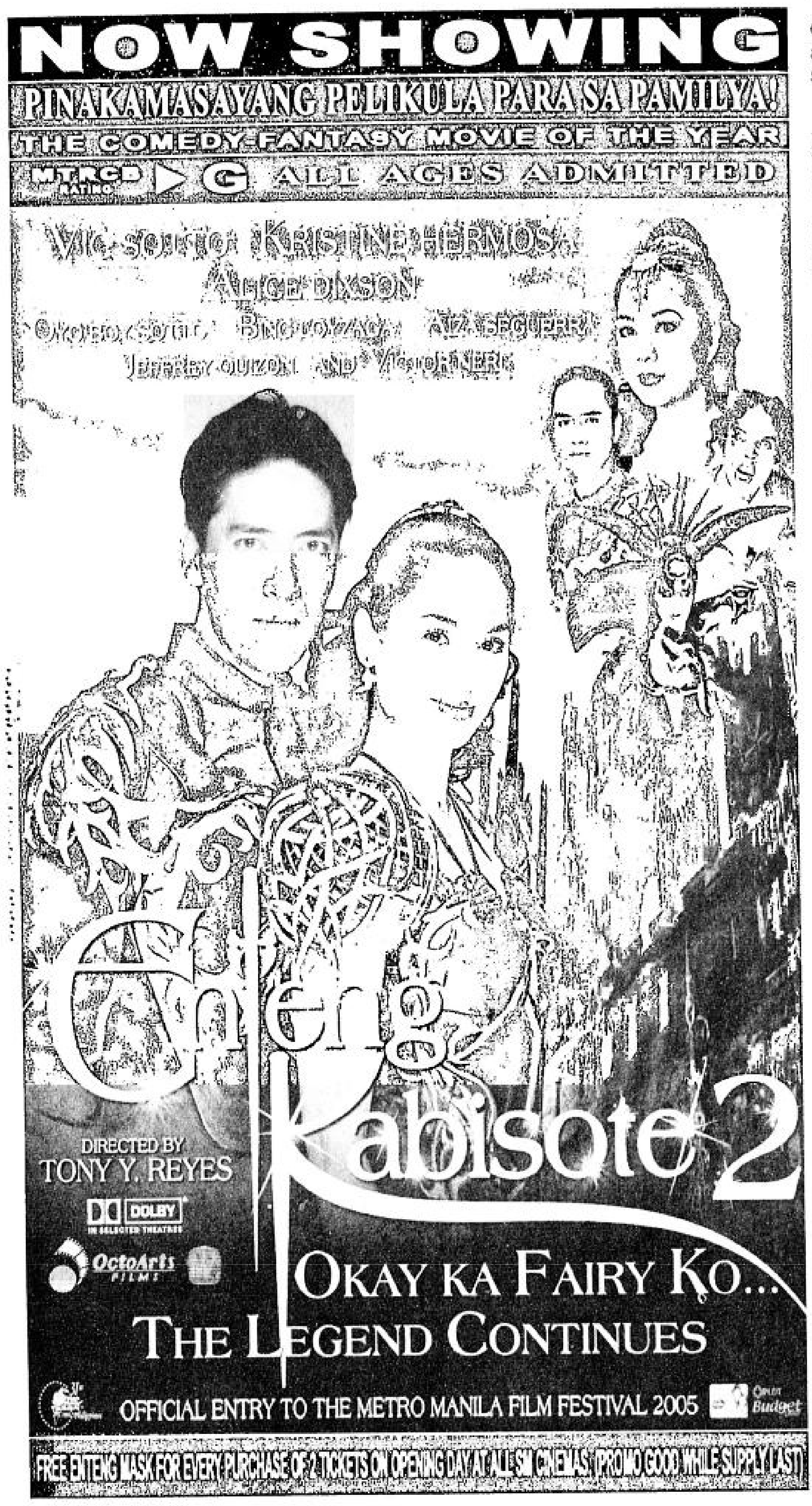

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THE COMEDY-FANTASY MOVIE OF THE YEAR
MTRCB RATING ▶ G ALL AGES ADMITTED
Vic Sotto Kristine Hermosa
Alice Dixson
Oyo Boy Sotto Bing Loyzaga Aiza Seguerra
Jeffrey Quizon and Victor Neri
Enteng Kabisote 2
DIRECTED BY TONY Y. REYES
DOLBY IN SELECTED THEATRES
OctoArts FILMS
OKAY KA FAIRY KO... THE LEGEND CONTINUES
OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2005
Opus Budget
FREE ENTENG MASK FOR EVERY PURCHASE OF 2 TICKETS ON OPENING DAY AT ALL SM CINEMAS. (PROMO GOOD WHILE SUPPLY LAST)

NOW SHOWING
A MUST SEE HORROR-THRILLER FILM
MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13 CHILDREN BELOW 13 YRS. OLD SHALL BE ALLOWED ONLY IF ACCOMPANIED BY A PARENT OR ADULT.
WARNING: THIS MOVIE CONTAINS FRIGHTFUL SCENES AND OTHER SCENES THAT WOULD BE DISTRESSFUL TO VERY YOUNG VIEWERS. PARENTS ARE STRONGLY CAUTIONED AGAINST BRINGING ALONG CHILDREN BELOW THE AGE OF 13 YEARS.
RICA Peralejo MARVIN Agustin and ALESSANDRA De Rossi introducing RYAN Agoncillo
ANDREA Del Rosario ANA Capri JAMES Blanco LIZA and Lorena
MANIWALA
MAKIRAMDAM
MATAKOT...
Kutob
CANARY FILMS PRESENTATION
DISTRIBUTED BY OctoArts FILMS
DIRECTED BY JOSE JAVIER REYES
DOLBY IN SELECTED THEATRES
AXN
Pacific Blue
OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2005

FREE TAROT READING FOR TICKET HOLDERS AT SM MEGAMALL, SM FAIRVIEW & SM NORTH ON DEC. 26, 27 & 28.

MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION
MOVIE GUIDE
NOW SHOWING

SHANG CINEPLEX
6th floor Shangri-la Plaza EDSA corner Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City
Telephone: 833.2227 / 6337851 loc. 171

1 (DOLBY)	ENTENG KABISOTE 2 GP
2 (DOLBY)	MULAWIN THE MOVIE GP
3 (DOLBY)	AKO LEGAL WIFE P13
4 (DOLBY)	KUTOB P13

PREMIERE
(DOLBY) CLOSED

CINEMA 2000
Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216

1	MULAWIN
2	EXODUS
3	KUTOB
4	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL

starmall Movies
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266150

3	EXODUS
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX)	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
5	AKO LEGAL WIFE

METROPOLIS star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8504285, 5433994

1	AKO LEGAL WIFE
2	ENTENG KABISOTE -2
3	TERRORIST HUNTER
4	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL

THEATRES
NE Pacific Mall Cabanatuan,
Telephone No. (044) 600-3025

1	MULAWIN
2	ENTENG KABISOTE -2
3	EXODUS

Cinemagic Pacific Mall
(Lucena City) tel. 6605271

1	AKO LEGAL WIFE
2	ENTENG KABISOTE -2
3	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
4	MULAWIN

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72

1 (DDS)	EXODUS
2 (SDDS)	MULAWIN
3 (DTS)	ENTENG KABISOTE -2
4 GOLD (DTS)	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
5 GOLD (DOLBY)	MULAWIN
6 GOLD (SDDS)	KUTOB
7 GOLD (DOLBY)	EXODUS
8	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
9	ENTENG KABISOTE -2
10	AKO LEGAL WIFE

Blue Wave MARIKINA
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927

1 (DOLBY)	AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 (DOLBY)	ENTENG KABISOTE -2
3 (DOLBY)	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
4 (DOLBY)	EXODUS

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 7334228

1 (DOLBY)	EXODUS
2	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
3	ENTENG KABISOTE
4	TERRORIST HUNTER
5	MULAWIN

MARKETPLACE
Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

1	ENTENG KABISOTE
2	MULAWIN
3	TERRORIST HUNTER
4	KUTOB

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274

1	MULAWIN
2	TERRORIST HUNTER
3	KUTOB

Center Mall Cinema
Bagulo Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue
(Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)

1	AKO LEGAL WIFE
2	ENTENG KABISOTE

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1 (DOLBY EX)	MULAWIN
2	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
3 (DTS EX)	ENTENG KABISOTE
4	EXODUS

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121

1	MULAWIN
2	ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DOLBY)	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
4 (DTS)	EXODUS

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8469

1	MULAWIN
2	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
3 (DOLBY)	ENTENG KABISOTE
4 (DTS)	EXODUS

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1	MULAWIN
2	EXODUS

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City)
tel 687.6963 or 72

1 (DOLBY)	AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 (DOLBY)	ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 (DOLBY)	EXODUS
4 (DOLBY)	KUTOB

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1	MULAWIN
2 (DTS)	ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DOLBY)	EXODUS
4	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Binan) tel. (049) 4111146

1	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
2 (DOLBY)	EXODUS
3 (DTS)	ENTENG KABISOTE
4	MULAWIN

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1	ENTENG KABISOTE
2	MULAWIN
3 (DOLBY)	EXODUS

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729

1	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
2	ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DOLBY)	EXODUS
4 (DTS)	MULAWIN

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320

1	MULAWIN
2	EXODUS
3 (DOLBY)	ENTENG KABISOTE

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan)

1	EXODUS
2	ENTENG KABISOTE

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748

1	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
2	EXODUST

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 (DOLBY)	AKO LEGAL WIFE
2	MULAWIN
3	KUTOB
4 (DTS)	EXODUST

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 (DOLBY)	EXODUST
2	ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DTS)	MULAWIN
4	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
5	ENTENG KABISOTE

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
2	ENTENG KABISOTE
3	MULAWIN
4	EXODUST

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029

1	TERRORIST HUNTER
2	ENTENG KABISOTE

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

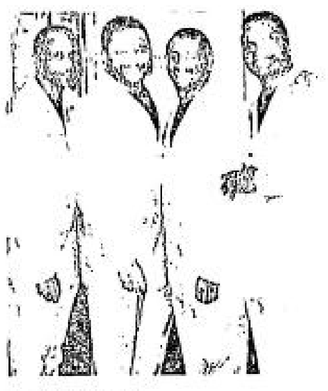
Stylistics show tonight at PICC

TONIGHT AND TOMORROW NIGHT AT THE Philippine International Convention Center, Viva Concerts and Events presents The Stylistics, a foreign R&B act that is a certified Pinoy favorite on account of their biggest hits, indeed some of the worlds' most enduring love songs. The impressive list includes "Betcha By Golly Wow," "I'm Stone In Love With You," "You'll Never Get To Heaven If You Break My Heart," "Stop, Look, Listen To Your Heart" and "You Make Me Feel Brand New."

Dubbed "The Greatest Hits Live," the show will also feature four huge Filipino talents—Rico J. Puno, Rey Valera, Hajji Alejandro and Marco Sison.

The Stylistics consists of Airrion Love, Herbie Murrell and new members Harold "Eban" Brown and Van Fields.

Tickets are priced at P3,500, P3,000, P2,500 and P1,000. Call 911-5555, 891-9999, or 551-6296.



STYLISTICS

SHOW TIME

Tonight

"Hua Mulan Fantasy Magical Journey," an acrobatic and magical show, at the **Aliw Theater**, Star City, CCP Complex, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City. Call 911-5555 or 891-9999.

1st World Pyro Olympics at the Esplanade in **Bay City Central Business Park**, Pasay.

Route 70 at Merk's, Greenbelt 3.

Stringzkin at **Elbow Room**, Metrowalk, Pasig ire dancers and a surprise band will grace **Oakley and Reef Party at Club Paraw** in Boracay.

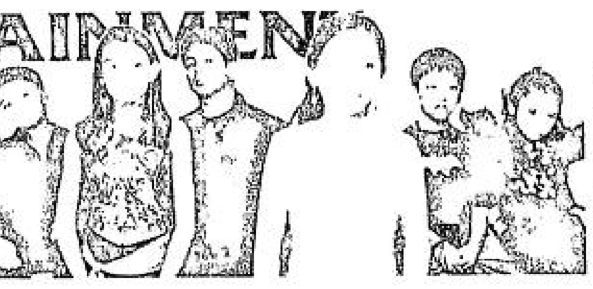
George and **Annapolis** at **Suburbia Shayne** with **Brown Sugar** and **Fairground** at **Virgin Café**.

Tomorrow

"Hua Mulan Fantasy Magical Journey," an acrobatic and magical show, at the **Aliw Theater**, Star City, CCP Complex, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City. Call 911-5555 or 891-9999.

1st World Pyro Olympics at the Esplanade in **Bay City Central Business Park**, Pasay.

Route 70 at Merk's, Greenbelt 3.

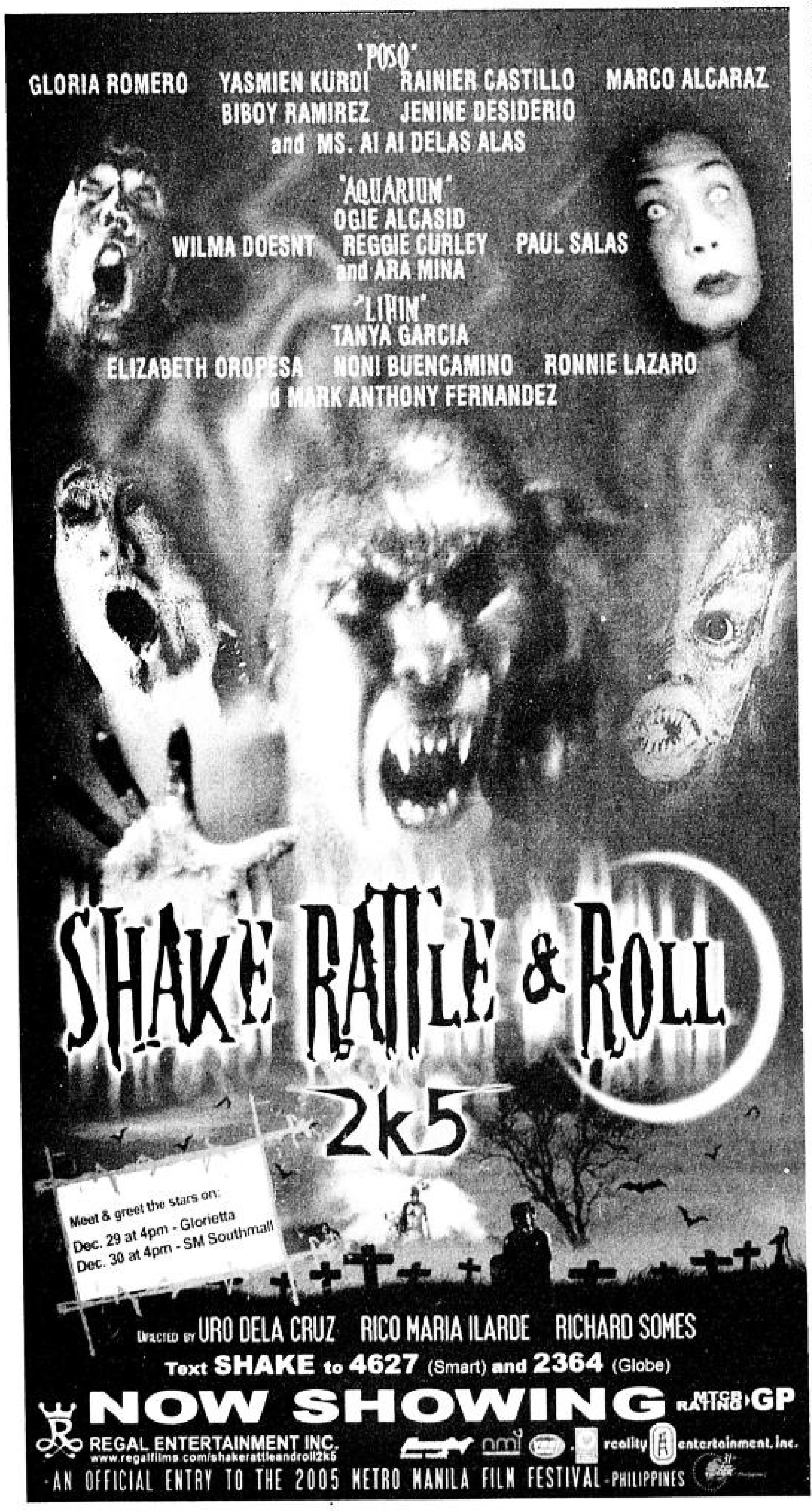


YOUNG AND TALENTED
The Center for Pop Music Philippines recently presented seven new singing talents in a concert titled "The Big Night" at the Music Museum in Greenhills, San Juan. The young artists are Nyco Arca, Chester Mico, Ellisse Dolleton, Ervin Paredes, Christine Manalo, Jonathan Paredes and Ashley Arca.

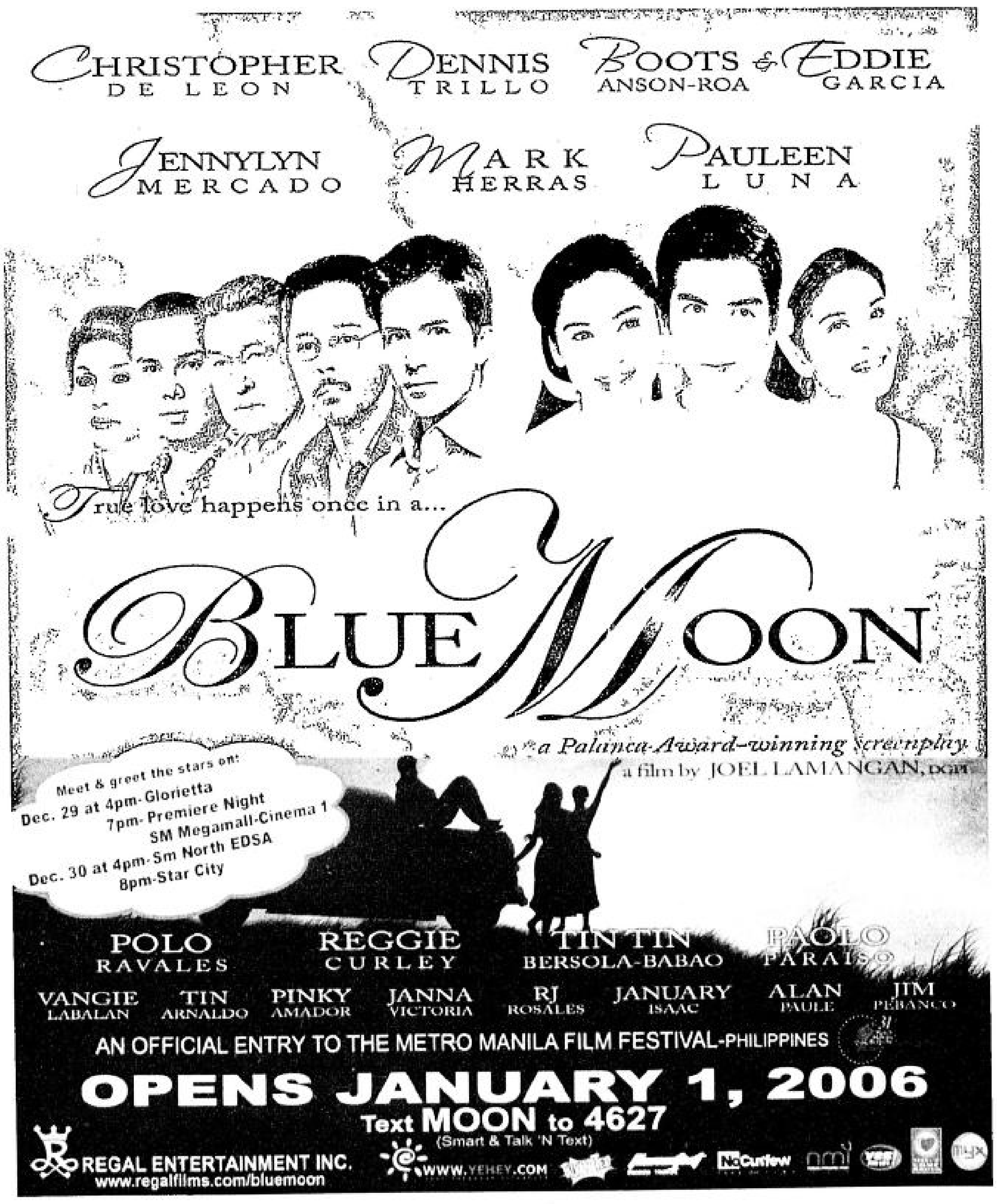
EASTWOOD CINEMAS
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX
Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City
E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave. (C-5) Quezon City
For inquiries, call:
687-6963
GUARANTEED SEATS
MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

1	AKO LEGAL WIFE	12:05, 2:35, 5:05, 7:35, 10:05	PG-13
2	ENTENG KABISOTE 2	1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00	GP
3	EXODUS	12:35, 3:05, 5:35, 8:05, 10:35	GP
4	KUTOB	1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00	PG-13

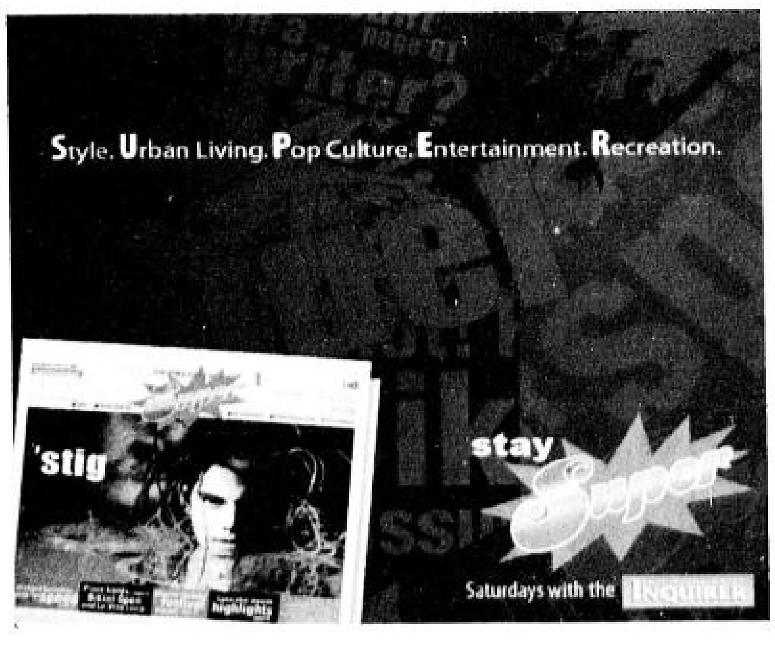
合法妻
Ako Legal Wife
Mano Po 4?!
Meet & greet the stars on:
Dec. 29 at 4pm - Glorietta
Dec. 30 at 4pm - SM Southmall
8pm - Star City
Directed by JOEL LAMANGAN, dgpi
Rufa Mae Quinto Cherry Pie Picache Jay Manalo and ZsaZsa Padilla
John Prats JC de Vera Bianca King Ella Guevara Julianne Lee
AN OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE 2005 METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL-PHILIPPINES
Text WIFE to 4627 (Smart) and 2364 (Globe)
NOW SHOWING
B MTRCB RATING PG-13
REGAL ENTERTAINMENT INC.
www.regalfilms.com/akolegalwife
YEHEY



"POSO"
GLORIA ROMERO YASMIEN KURDI RAINIER CASTILLO MARCO ALCARAZ
BIBOY RAMIREZ JENINE DESIDERIO
and MS. AI AI DELAS ALAS
"AQUARIUM"
OGIE ALCASID
WILMA DOESNT REGGIE CURLEY PAUL SALAS
and ARA MINA
"LIHIM"
TANYA GARCIA
ELIZABETH OROPESA NONI BUENCAMINO RONNIE LAZARO
and MARK ANTHONY FERNANDEZ
SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 2k5
Meet & greet the stars on:
Dec. 29 at 4pm - Glorietta
Dec. 30 at 4pm - SM Southmall
DIRECTED BY URO DELA CRUZ RICO MARIA ILARDE RICHARD SOMES
Text SHAKE to 4627 (Smart) and 2364 (Globe)
NOW SHOWING MTRCB RATING GP
REGAL ENTERTAINMENT INC.
www.regalfilms.com/shakerattleandroll2k5
reality entertainment, inc.
AN OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE 2005 METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL-PHILIPPINES



CHRISTOPHER DE LEON DENNIS TRILLO BOOTS ANSON-ROA & EDDIE GARCIA
JENNYLYN MERCADO MARK HERRAS PAULEEN LUNA
True love happens once in a...
BLUE MOON
a Palanca-Award-winning screenplay
a film by JOEL LAMANGAN, DGPI
Meet & greet the stars on:
Dec. 29 at 4pm-Glorietta
7pm-Premiere Night
SM Megamall-Cinema 1
Dec. 30 at 4pm-Sm North EDSA
8pm-Star City
POLO RAVALES REGGIE CURLEY TIN TIN BERSOLA-BABAO PAOLO PARAISO
VANGIE LABALAN TIN ARNALDO PINKY AMADOR JANNA VICTORIA RJ ROSALES JANUARY ISAAC ALAN PAULE JIM PEBANCO
AN OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL-PHILIPPINES
OPENS JANUARY 1, 2006
Text MOON to 4627
(Smart & Talk 'N Text)
REGAL ENTERTAINMENT INC.
www.regalfilms.com/bluemoon
WWW.YEHEY.COM
NoCurfew



Style. Urban Living. Pop Culture. Entertainment. Recreation.
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highlights
stay Super
Saturdays with the INQUIRER

TICKETS ALSO AVAILABLE AT THE ALIW THEATER (STAR CITY) TICKET BOOTH STARTING 1:00 PM DAILY!
BIG FAMILY SHOW, MAGANDANG PAMASKO!
ACROBATIC NA, MAGIC AT COMEDY PA ! PINAGUUSAPAN !!
HUA MULAN
Magical Fantasy Journey
Show Schedule :
December 23 7:00pm
December 24 4:00pm
December 25 1:00pm / 4:00pm 7:00pm
December 26 4:00pm / 7:00pm
December 27 7:00pm
December 28 7:00pm
December 29 4:00pm / 7:00pm
December 30 4:00pm / 7:00pm
January 1 4:00pm / 7:00pm
January 2 4:00pm
TICKETNET
COMPUTERIZED TICKETING NETWORK
911-5555
TicketWorld
891-9999
ALIW THEATER AT STAR CITY, ROXAS BLVD
DECEMBER 23, 2005 TO JANUARY 2, 2006
TICKET PRICE:
PHP 600. PHP 500. PHP 400 PHP 200
DZRH

ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD CINEMAS MOVIE GUIDE

MOVIEWORLD

CINEMA ACCESS
635-5555
FOR ALL BRANCHES

www.robinsonsmovieworld.com

MOVIES/SCHEDULES/PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

GALLERIA
632-9116

1 AKO LEGAL WIFE • THX
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

2 EXODUS
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

3 ENTENG KABISOTE
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

4 KUTOB
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

5 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

6 MULAWIN
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

7 TERRORIST HUNTER
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

8 EXODUS
12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:30

9 ENTENG KABISOTE
10:15 12:30 3:00 5:30 8:00

10 MULAWIN
2:00 4:30 7:00 9:30

ERMITA
536-7809 to 12

1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

2 ENTENG KABISOTE
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

3 MULAWIN
10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00

4 TERRORIST HUNTER
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

5 KUTOB
10.10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

6 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00

7 EXODUS
10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00

METRO EAST
682-8193 • 682-8199

1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
10:45 1:20 3:55 6:30 9:05

2 EXODUS
2:15 4:35 6:55 9:15

3 ENTENG KABISOTE
12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:20

4 MULAWIN
11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:00

5 AKO LEGAL WIFE
10:45 1:20 3:55 6:30 9:05

6 TERRORIST HUNTER
2:15 4:35 6:55 9:15

7 KUTOB
12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:20

8 EXODUS
11:25 1:45 4:05 6:25 8:45

NOVALICHES
935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 EXODUS
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
3 KUTOB
4 TERRORIST HUNTER
5 MULAWIN
6 ENTENG KABISOTE
7 AKO LEGAL WIFE
8 EXODUS

CITISQUARE MALABON
288-2575

1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
2 EXODUS
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER
687-5378

1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
3 EXODUS
4 MULAWIN

CHECK THIS OUT ▸▸

ADVANCE TICKET SELLING

december 21 to january 07

Tickets are now available at all
Robinsons Movieworld Branches

Present ticket directly to the Cinema Porter

MTRCB Rating: G
Opens on January 08 at Robinsons Movieworld

STA. ROSA
(049) 837-0907

1 KING KONG
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 MULAWIN
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE
5 EXODUS

LIPA
(043) 757-3664
(043) 312-5870

1 KING KONG
2 EXODUS
3 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 MULAWIN
5 EXODUS

DASMARIÑAS
(046) 852-2125
(046) 416-4332

1 MULAWIN
2 TERRORIST HUNTER
3 KUTOB
4 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
5 EXODUS

ANGELES
(045) 892-2348

1 KING KONG
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 MULAWIN
4 MULAWIN

IMUS
(046) 875-3838
(046) 471-8188

1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 MULAWIN
4 TERRORIST HUNTER
5 KUTOB
6 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL

STARMILLS
(045) 875-1927
(045) 961-5270

1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 TERRORIST HUNTER
3 KUTOB
4 EXODUS
5 ENTENG KABISOTE
6 MULAWIN

BACOLOD
(034) 441-0453
(034) 441-0459

1 KING KONG
2 EXODUS
3 MULAWIN
4 ENTENG KABISOTE
5 AKO LEGAL WIFE
6 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL

ILOILO
(033) 336-8070

1 KUTOB
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
3 EXODUS
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE
5 ENTENG KABISOTE
6 MULAWIN

The Perfect Gift All Year Round

A Pre Paid Movie Pass to the Hottest Seats in town.

Get Special discounts for volume purchases!

For marketing and events/reservations please call Marketing Services Department at 687-7945 to 47 locals 14 and 15

AYALA CENTER
GLORIETTA • GREENBELT

ALABANG TOWN CENTER

AYALA CENTER CEBU

AYALA MALLS
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NOW AVAILABLE IN MOST TIMEZONE CENTERS!
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"Time For Fun!"
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At the Activity Center

GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	AYALA CENTER CEBU
Stargazing feat. Stars of 2005 Metro Manila Film Festival December 28 to 29, 2005 Glorietta Activity Center Christmas Fireworks Display December 30 & 31, 2005; 9PM	Blims / Automatic Center Exhibit Dec, 19 to 31, 2005	Fast Win Exhibit December 19 to 29, 2005 Wagas Exhibit / Uyfang Bazaar December 1 to 31, 2005

AYALA GREENBELT

Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra Christmas Shows
December 30, 2005
Christmas Fireworks Display
December 30 & 31, 2005; 9PM

GREENBELT 1 Onstage AYALA CENTER

NOT JUST JAZZ CHRISTMAS
December 28 & 29
For inquiries, please call 887-0710

Ayala MUSEUM

Registration for Art Workshops now on-going at Ayala Museum
For inquiries, please call 757-7117 to 21 loc 29.
Online registration at www.ayalamuseum.org

AYALA CINEMAS

AYALA CINEMAS

THX

Reserve your seats by texting SURESEATS GB3 or SURESEATS G4 to 2333 (Globe) or 211 (Smart) or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations.

Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification call 729 7777

G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	4 EXODUS
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	3 THX MULAWIN GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 TERRORIST HUNTER	5 KUTOB	6 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	7 EXODUS
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX MULAWIN GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX TERRORIST HUNTER GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 KUTOB GUARANTEED SEATS	4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL GUARANTEED SEATS	5 EXODUS GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX MULAWIN	2 TERRORIST HUNTER		
	3 KUTOB	4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	5 EXODUS	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	3 MULAWIN	4 TERRORIST HUNTER

Ayala Cinemas & Regal Entertainment Present

REGAL EXTRAVAGANZA

Meet & greet the stars of

SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 2k5
Ako Legal Wife
MULAWIN THE MOVIE
BLUE MOON

also featuring one of the hottest bands today **ORANGE & LEMONS**

live at the Glorietta Activity Center!

December 29 - 4:00 PM

Reserved seats for the first 200 moviegoers who will present their SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL, AKO LEGAL WIFE, MULAWIN & BLUE MOON movie tickets purchased in any Ayala Cinemas on December 29.

AYALA CINEMAS
REGAL ENTERTAINMENT INC.

Customer Service text hotline:	0917 6095900
Customer Service text hotline:	Glorietta - 752 7272; from 10am to 8pm Greenbelt - 757 4853; from 11am to 12mn
Alabang Town Center -	842 2782; from 10am to 8pm
Ayala Center Cebu -	(032) 231 5342 loc 324

All-Digital Cinemas

MARKET! MARKET!
The fun is in the finds
Developed and managed by Ayala Land, Inc.

Movies are subject to change without prior notice. Customer Service Hotline: 886 [illegible]

Free Seating Cinemas: P80.00

① SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL
② KUTOB
③ MULAWIN
④ ENTENG KABISOTE 2
⑤ AKO LEGAL WIFE

EVENTS! EVENTS!

MARKET!
MARKET!
The fun is in the finds

MARKET!
MARKET!
The fun is in the finds

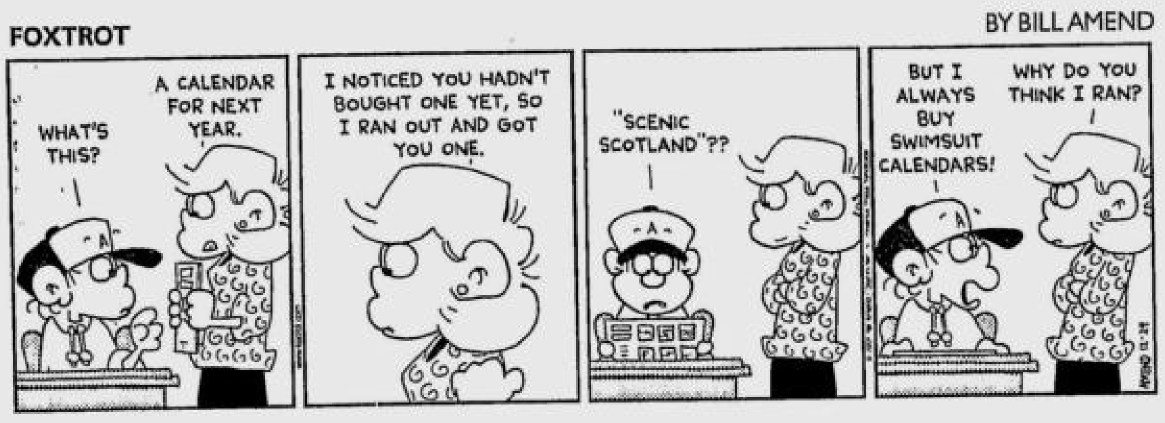
Christmas Shopping Bag

1. Promo period is from Dec. 9 to 31, 2005.
2. For every P500 single or accumulated receipt purchase dated on the same day in any regular retail store, food choices, and Metro Department Store and Supermarket, shoppers will get 1 Christmas Shopping Bag.
3. A maximum of 4 shopping bags will be given to shoppers presenting single or accumulated receipts amounting to P2001 and over.
4. Shoppers will present their receipt to the Customer Service booth to redeem their Market! Market! shopping bag.

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A2-580, Series of 2005

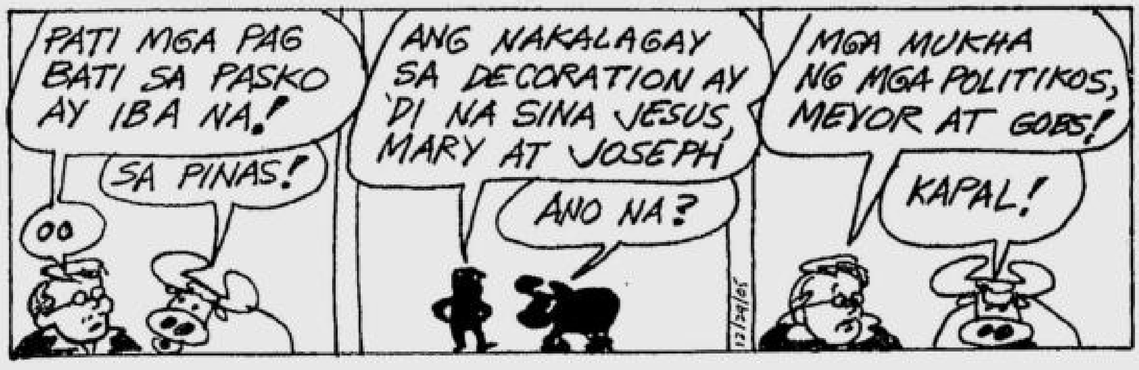
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


WHAT'S THIS?
A CALENDAR FOR NEXT YEAR.
I NOTICED YOU HADN'T BOUGHT ONE YET, SO I RAN OUT AND GOT YOU ONE.
"SCENIC SCOTLAND"??
BUT I ALWAYS BUY SWIMSUIT CALENDARS!
WHY DO YOU THINK I RAN?

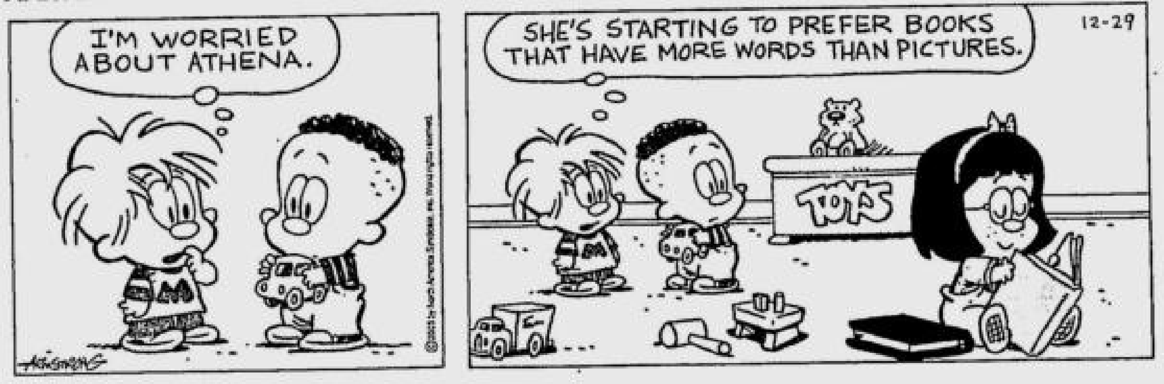
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


PATI MGA PAG BATI SA PASKO AY IBA NA!
SA PINAS!
OO
ANG NAKALAGAY SA DECORATION AY 'DI NA SINA JESUS, MARY AT JOSEPH
ANO NA?
MGA MUKHA NG MGA POLITIKOS, MEYOR AT GOBS!
KAPAL!

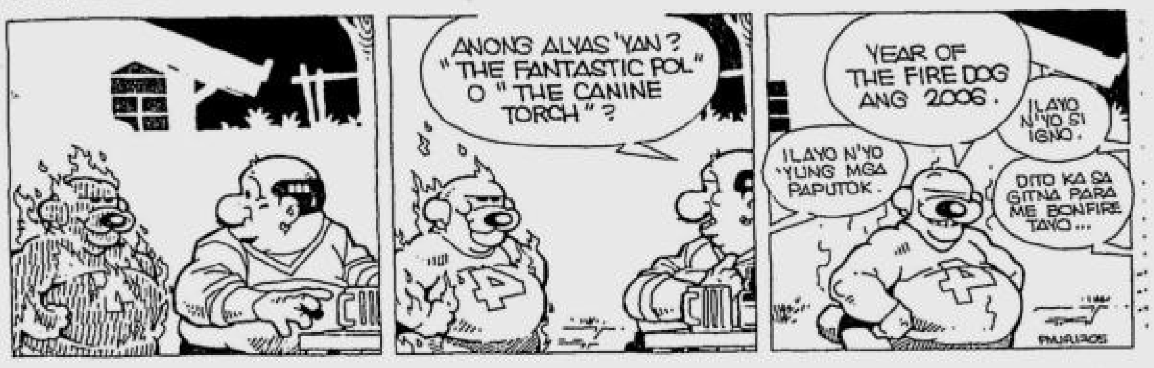
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


I'M WORRIED ABOUT ATHENA.
SHE'S STARTING TO PREFER BOOKS THAT HAVE MORE WORDS THAN PICTURES.
12-29
TOYS

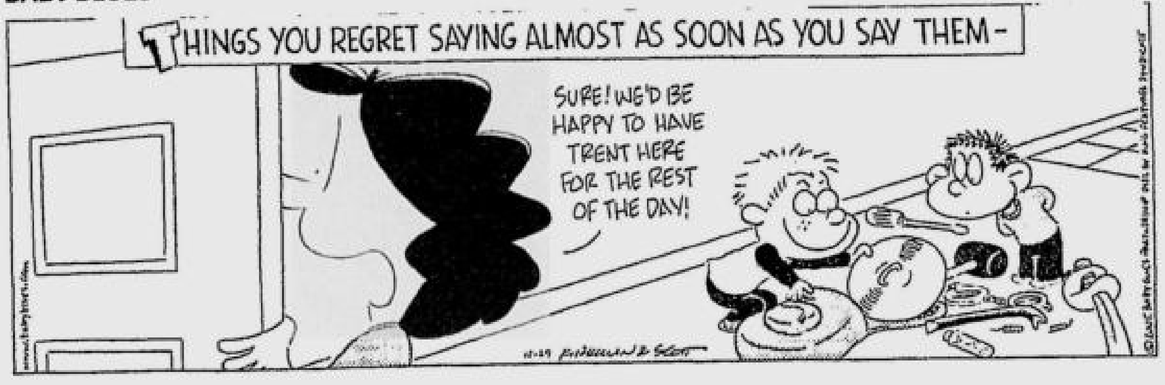
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR.


ANONG ALYAS 'YAN? "THE FANTASTIC POL" O "THE CANINE TORCH"?
YEAR OF THE FIRE DOG ANG 2006.
ILAYO N'YO SI IGNO.
ILAYO N'YO 'YUNG MGA PAPUTOK.
DITO KA SA GITNA PARA ME BONFIRE TAYO...

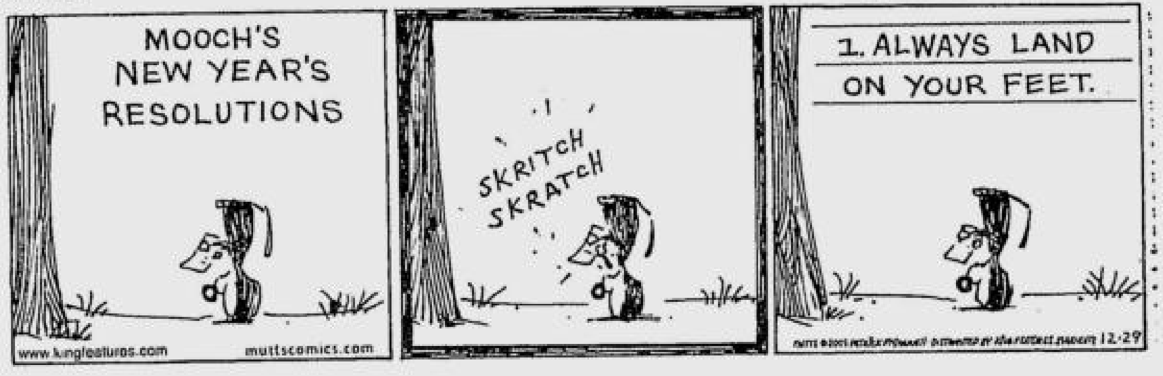
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


THINGS YOU REGRET SAYING ALMOST AS SOON AS YOU SAY THEM-
SURE! WE'D BE HAPPY TO HAVE TRENT HERE FOR THE REST OF THE DAY!

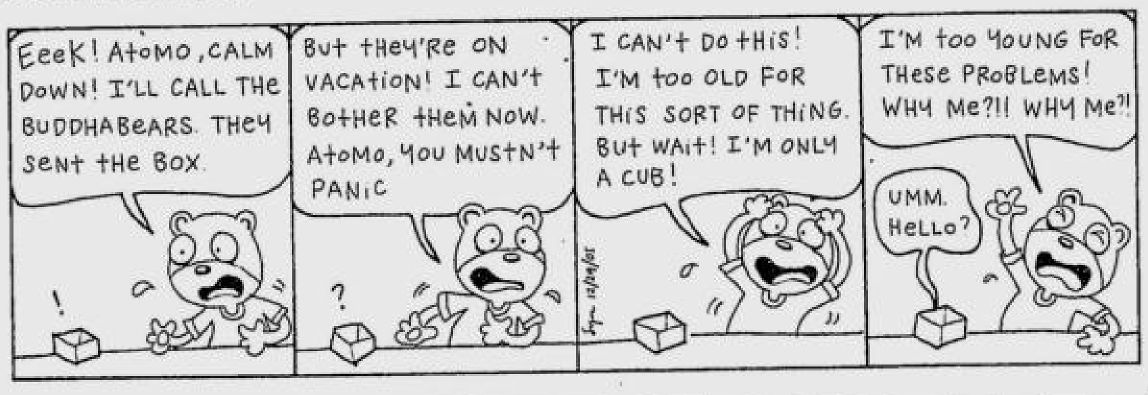
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


MOOCH'S NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS
SKRITCH SKRATCH
1. ALWAYS LAND ON YOUR FEET.
www.kingfeatures.com
muttscomics.com
12-29

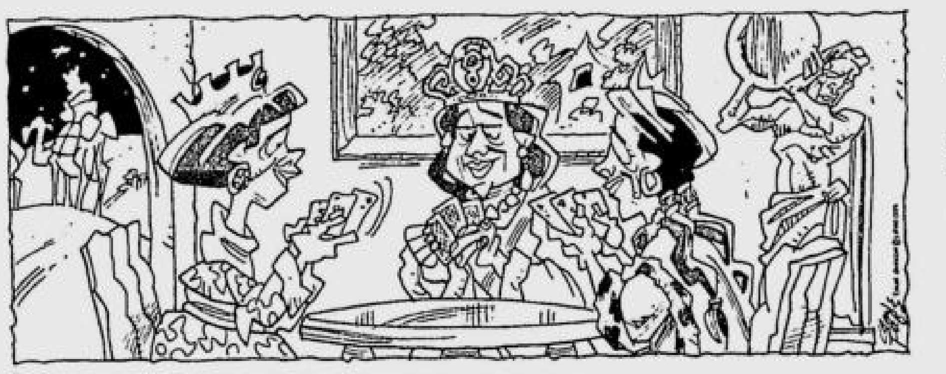
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Eeek! Atomo, CALM DOWN! I'LL CALL THE BUDDHABEARS. They sent the Box.
But they're ON VACATION! I CAN'T Bother them NOW. Atomo, You MUSTN'T PANIC
I CAN'T DO THIS! I'M too OLD FOR THIS SORT OF THING. But WAIT! I'M ONLY A CUB!
I'M too YOUNG FOR These PROBLEMS! WHY Me?!! WHY Me?!
UMM. HELLO?

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS



NANG UMALIS ANG TATLONG HARI PARA PUMUNTA SA BETHLEHEM, NAGLARO NAMAN NG TONG-ITS ANG TATLONG REYNA

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have a good sense of humor and an entertaining personality. People enjoy your company, although your frankness sometimes surprises others. You're not aggressive, yet you are often given positions of leadership. Work hard to build or construct something in the next year. Your efforts will definitely bring you an important payoff in a few years.
Birthdate of: Jude Law, actor; Mary Tyler Moore, actress; Jon Voight, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Try to do anything different today. Shake up your routine a bit. You're eager to learn more and explore different parts of the world. If you can travel, by all means do so. Visit bookstores, different shops and museums.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You might be concerned about money, possessions or something you share with someone else. By nature, you're a collector. You care about things—especially good things.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): The Moon is opposite your sign today. This totally directs your attention to others. Partners, spouses, friends are important to you now. You feel a bit more emotional about everything.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Something at work makes you feel quite undecided. You're not sure what to do. Since you make decisions from an emotional base, just wait.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Your attention is drawn to children, the theater, professional sports, creative projects and social occasions. You feel prankish, playful and flirtatious!

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Home, family and domestic matters are your primary concern today. Talk to relatives. Talk to family. Hear what others want to say. You might be surprised at what you'll learn.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You have lots of errands to take care of. Furthermore, siblings and friends want to talk to you. Remain a moving target. This is a busy day.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Money, possessions and how you earn your cash and how you spend it are all areas you're thinking about. Your earnings will improve in a more solid way.

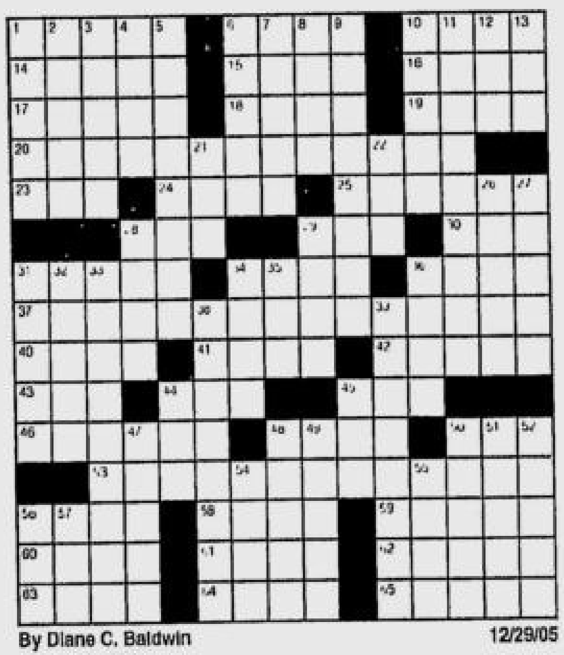
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): The Moon is in your sign today. In one way it makes you a bit luckier than usual. However, it also makes you feel a bit more emotional. Nevertheless, it's a good thing.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You need peace, quiet and solitude today. Do whatever you can to slip away just for a little bit. Even five minutes will help you. You need to do some private thinking.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Discussions with friends are warm and reassuring today. A female friend in particular might need a sympathetic ear.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Talk to parents, bosses and important people today. They will listen to you. It's as if you have an inside track. Trust your gut instincts as well.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Diane C. Baldwin
Columbia, MD
12/29/05

ACROSS
1 Hurt all over
6 Sixth day creation
10 Gondola alternative
14 Tan shade
15 Horne or Olin
16 Hodgepodge
17 Gets one's goat
18 Cover for a crook
19 Iditarod destination
20 Start of advice
23 Vote against
24 Electrical measures
25 Thingamabob
28 Astronaut Grissom
29 Show of deference
30 Healthful getaway
31 Sing like Bing
34 Go at a gallop
36 Comparison word
37 Part 2 of advice
40 Singing brothers' surname
41 Loads a brayer
42 Humorous
43 What to call an officer
44 Contribute
45 Came down with
46 Threaten
48 Can't pay up
50 Hem's partner
53 Part 3 of advice
56 Small pitchers
58 __-friendly
59 Type of ray
60 Arthur of the courts
61 Jolly old salts
62 Senior
63 Light bulb power unit
64 Falling-out
65 Impertinent

DOWN
1 Ohio city
2 "The Good Earth" setting
3 "Rock around the Clock" singer
4 __ out (barely manages)
5 Uneven bars finale
6 Trepidation
7 Ledger entries
8 Once more
9 Toro's adversaries
10 Lone Ranger's companion
11 Like some tired eyes
12 Objective
13 Lobster eggs
21 Cries of delight
22 Shout of pain
26 In isolation
27 Swell
28 Hits the road
29 Ovine utterances
31 Deep gap
32 Flaxlike fiber
33 Kind of bag
34 Be inclined
35 Wapiti
36 Piccadilly silly
38 Places to hole up
39 Duos
44 Do something
45 Hair goo
47 Plus
48 Met production
49 Most inferior
50 Caste member
51 Montezuma, notably
52 Dog-tired
54 Urgent letters?
55 Black tie affair
56 Chew the fat
57 Dos Passos trilogy

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

M	I	C	A	H	■	B	A	N	G	■	A	R	A	B
E	C	O	N	O	■	O	M	O	O	■	V	E	G	A
R	E	S	T	S	O	N	O	N	E	S	O	A	R	S
L	A	E	■	I	D	E	S	■	S	U	N	D	A	E
E	X	C	E	E	D	S	■	W	A	G	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	D	R	J	■	M	A	T	A	H	A	R	I
T	A	K	E	S	O	N	E	S	■	R	O	L	E	S
U	L	A	N	■	B	O	O	T	H	■	T	A	A	L
R	A	T	I	O	■	S	W	E	E	T	T	I	M	E
F	R	E	C	K	L	E	S	■	A	W	E	■	■	■
■	■	■	■	R	E	D	■	F	L	O	A	T	U	P
P	T	B	O	A	T	■	B	U	T	T	■	A	S	A
H	O	L	D	S	O	N	E	S	H	O	R	S	E	S
E	T	U	I	■	F	I	T	S	■	N	O	T	U	S
W	O	R	N	■	F	L	A	Y	■	E	T	Y	P	E

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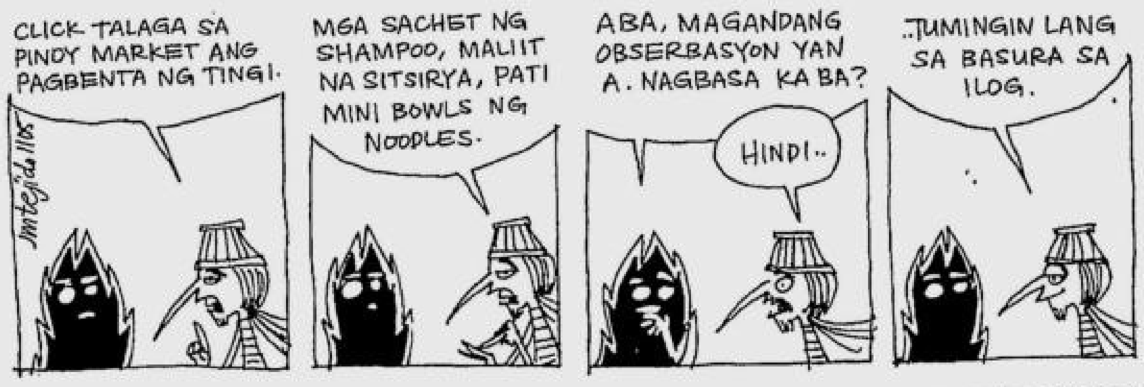
12/28/05

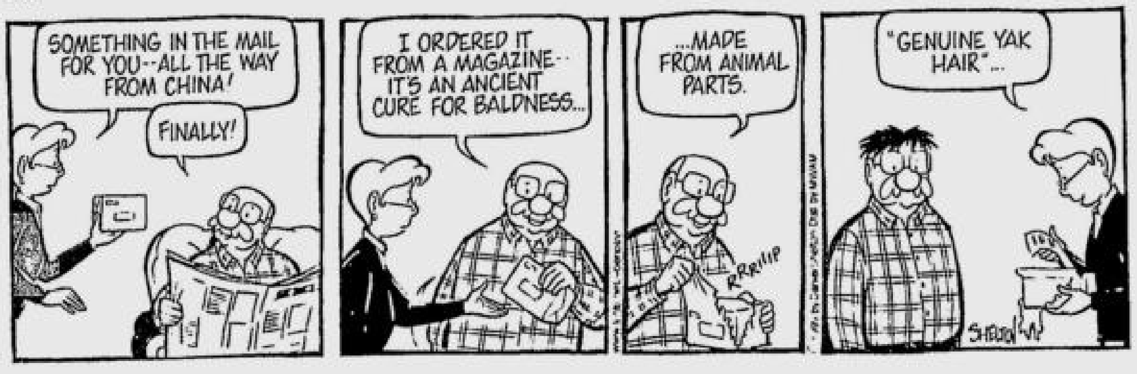
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


CLICK TALAGA SA PINOY MARKET ANG PAGBENTA NG TINGI.
MGA SACHET NG SHAMPOO, MALIIT NA SITSIRYA, PATI MINI BOWLS NG NOODLES.
ABA, MAGANDANG OBSERBASYON YAN A. NAGBASA KA BA?
HINDI..
..TUMINGIN LANG SA BASURA SA ILOG.

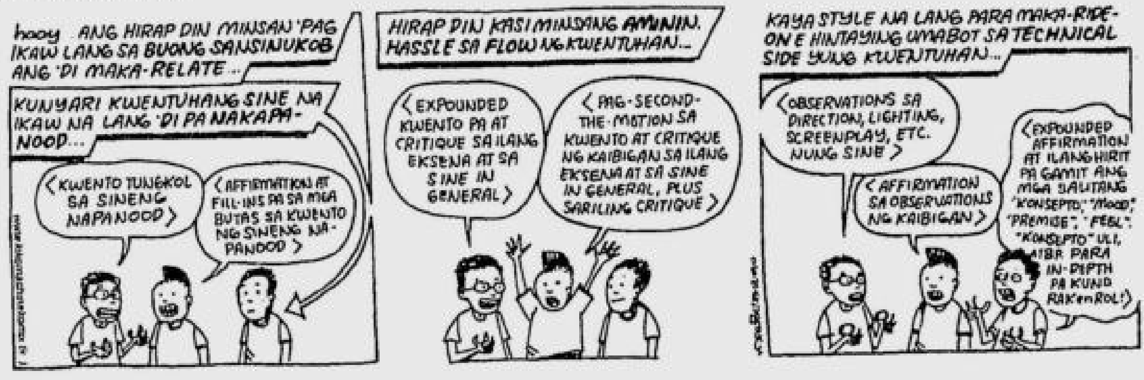
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


SOMETHING IN THE MAIL FOR YOU--ALL THE WAY FROM CHINA!
FINALLY!
I ORDERED IT FROM A MAGAZINE-- IT'S AN ANCIENT CURE FOR BALDNESS...
...MADE FROM ANIMAL PARTS.
RRRIIP
"GENUINE YAK HAIR"...

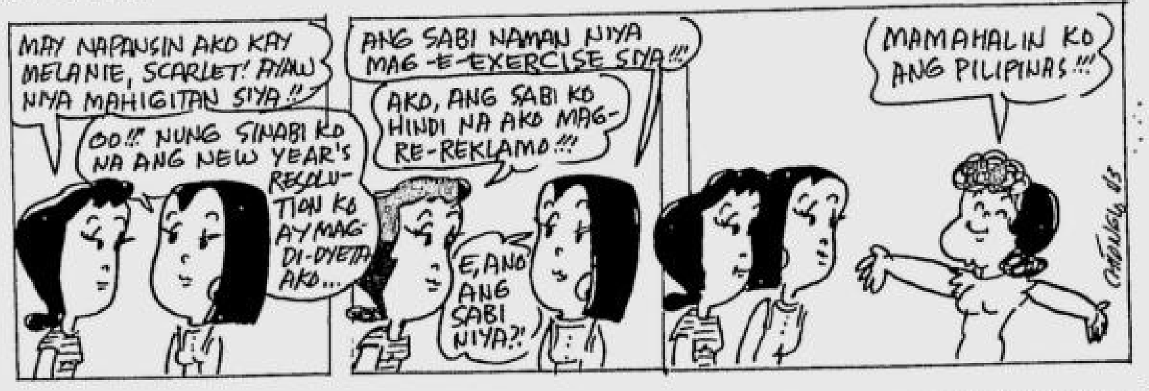
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


hooy ANG HIRAP DIN MINSAN 'PAG IKAW LANG SA BUONG SANSINUKOB ANG 'DI MAKA-RELATE...
KUNYARI KWENTUHANG SINE NA IKAW NA LANG 'DI PA NAKAPA-NOOD...
KWENTO TUNGKOL SA SINENG NAPANOOD
AFFIRMATION AT FILL-INS PA SA MGA BUTAS SA KWENTO NG SINENG NA-PANOOD
HIRAP DIN KASI MINSANG AMININ. HASSLE SA FLOW NG KWENTUHAN...
EXPOUNDED KWENTO PA AT CRITIQUE SA ILANG EKSENA AT SA SINE IN GENERAL
PAG-SECOND-THE-MOTION SA KWENTO AT CRITIQUE NG KAIBIGAN SA ILANG EKSENA AT SA SINE IN GENERAL, PLUS SARILING CRITIQUE
KAYA STYLE NA LANG PARA MAKA-RIDE-ON E HINTAYING UMABOT SA TECHNICAL SIDE YUNG KWENTUHAN...
OBSERVATIONS SA DIRECTION, LIGHTING, SCREENPLAY, ETC. NUNG SINE
AFFIRMATION SA OBSERVATIONS NG KAIBIGAN
EXPOUNDED AFFIRMATION AT ILANG HIRIT PA GAMIT ANG MGA SALITANG 'KONSEPTO', 'MOOD', 'PREMISE', 'FEEL', 'KONSEPTO' ULI, AT IBA PARA IN-DEPTH PA KUNG RAK en ROL!

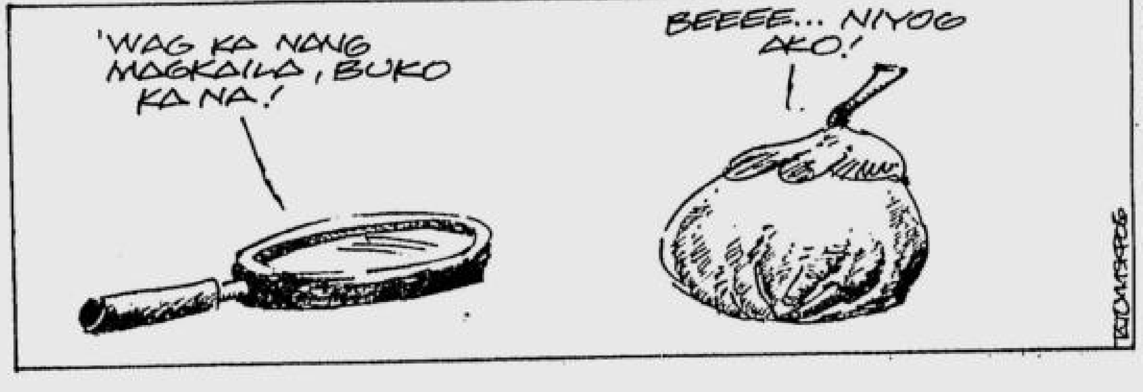
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


MAY NAPANSIN AKO KAY MELANIE, SCARLET! AYAW NIYA MAHIGITAN SIYA!!
OO!! NUNG SINABI KO NA ANG NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION KO AY MAG-DI-DYETA AKO...
ANG SABI NAMAN NIYA MAG-E-EXERCISE SIYA!!!
AKO, ANG SABI KO HINDI NA AKO MAG-RE-REKLAMO!!!
E, ANO ANG SABI NIYA?!
MAMAHALIN KO ANG PILIPINAS!!!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


'WAG KA NANG MAGKAILA, BUKO KA NA!
BEEEE... NIYOG AKO!

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The 31st Metro Manila Film Festival Philippines 2005

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GUARANTEED SEATS

THE PODIUM 633-8976
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE

MEGAMALL
1 EXODUS (Tales of the Enchanted Kingdom)

CEBU (032) 231-3876
1 KING KONG
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

METRO MANILA

SM MEGAMALL
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
3 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
5 KUTOB
6 AKO LEGAL WIFE
7 TERRORIST HUNTER
8 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
9 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
10 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
11 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
12 MULAWIN THE MOVIE

SM CITY STA. MESA
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
3 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
7 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
8 KUTOB
9 TERRORIST HUNTER
10 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM CITY BICUTAN
1 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
2 TERRORIST HUNTER
3 KUTOB
4 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM VALENZUELA NOW OPEN
1 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
2 KUTOB
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
4 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
2 TERRORIST HUNTER
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
5 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
6 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
8 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
9 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
10 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
11 KUTOB
12 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE
5 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
7 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
8 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
9 KUTOB
10 TERRORIST HUNTER

SM SUPERCENTER SUCAT
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
4 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
5 TERRORIST HUNTER
6 KUTOB
7 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
8 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM CITY MANILA
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
3 AKO LEGAL WIFE
4 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
8 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
9 TERRORIST HUNTER
10 KUTOB
11 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
12 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM SAN LAZARO
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 KUTOB
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
5 AKO LEGAL WIFE
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

WATCH and PLAY!

Get one (1) FREE Mobius Game Card for every two (2) ticket purchase when you watch at SM Cinema from December 25 to 29, 2005

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 7289 Series of 2005
SM CINEMA

LUZON

SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 KUTOB
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
5 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM CITY BAGUIO
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM MOLINO NOW OPEN
1 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
2 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM CITY BACOOR
1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
7 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
8 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY MARILAO
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 KING KONG

SM CITY DASMARINAS
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 KING KONG
3 AKO LEGAL WIFE
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM CITY LUCENA
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
2 KUTOB
3 KING KONG
4 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM CITY BATANGAS
1 KING KONG
2 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
1 KING KONG
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
5 TERRORIST HUNTER
6 KUTOB
7 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
8 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM

SM CITY ILOILO
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 2K5
3 KUTOB
4 TERRORIST HUNTER
5 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
6 KING KONG
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
8 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY DAVAO
1 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM
2 KING KONG
3 KUTOB
4 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
1 KING KONG
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 AKO LEGAL WIFE
4 EXODUS:TALES OF THENCHANTED KINGDOM

SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE
FOR MORE INFORMATION ON MOVIE LISTING, MTRCB RATING, SCREENING SCHEDULES AND THE LATEST HAPPENINGS AT SM CINEMA

Fantasy flicks rule!

From page A2-1

star Bong Revilla on Tuesday night during a party for his film entry. "We have until Jan. 8 to run it."

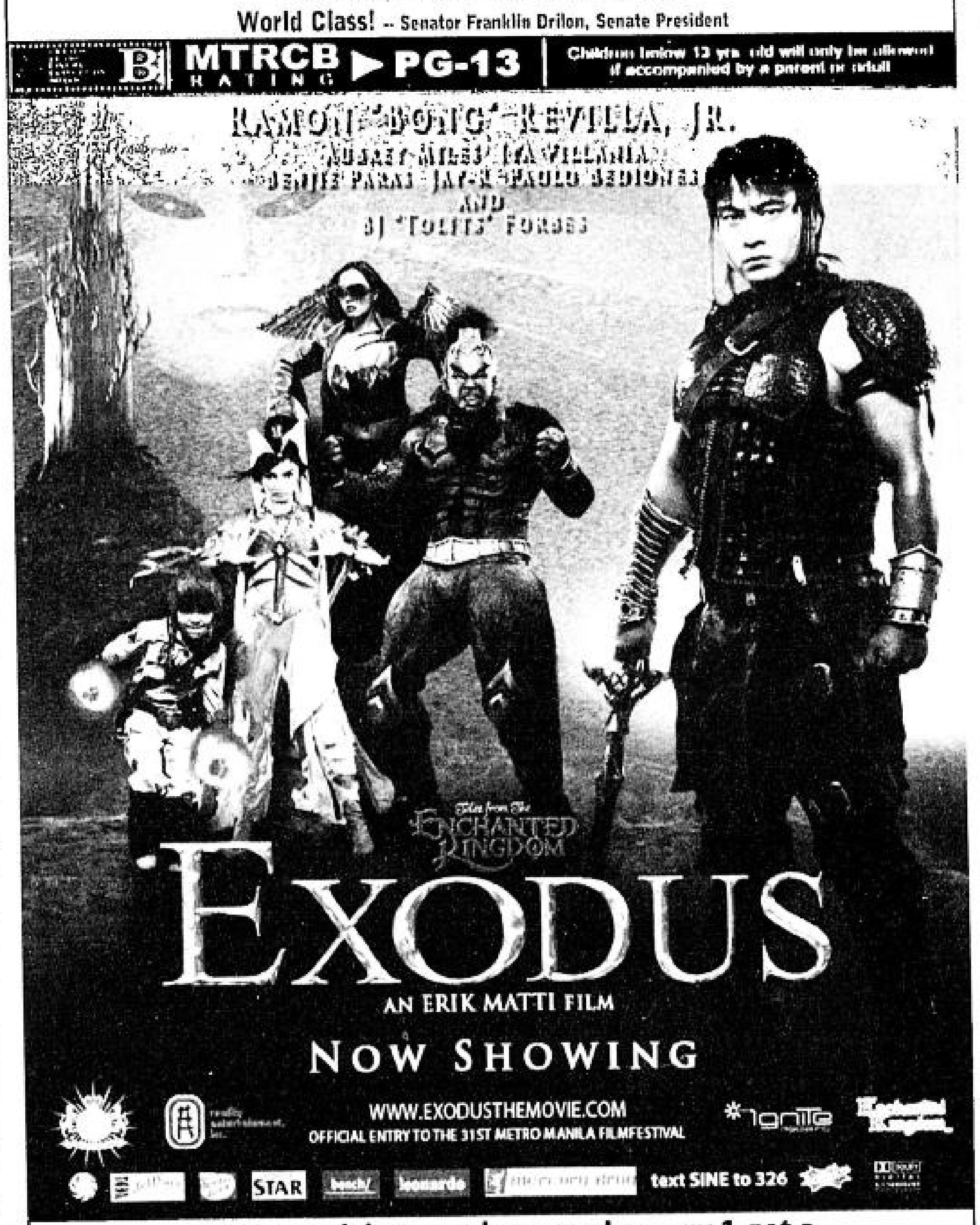
Vic Sotto, speaking at a party for his entry also on Tuesday, said he was "speechless, thankful and confused."

In an exclusive interview with INQUIRER Entertainment, he said: "I still can't believe we topped 'Enteng's' first-day gross last year."

But he clarified: "I am not competing with the other film entries. I am here to beat myself. So far, I have done that."

The festival runs until Jan. 7. The "Gabi ng Parangal" is set Jan. 6 will be at the Aliw Theater in Star City, CCP complex. *With Nini Valera*

Definitely, we will include EXODUS in our list of best pictures this year.
-- Mario Bautista, Film Critic/Columnist (People's Journal, Malaya, Manila Buletin)
The most expensive movie in the Metro Manila Film Festival, and the best as well!
--Nini Valera, Writer/Columnist (People's Journal)
World Class! -- Senator Franklin Drilon, Senate President


MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13
Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult
RAMON "BONG" REVILLA, JR.
AUBREY MILES IZA VILLANUEVA
DENISE PARAS JAY-R PAOLO BEDIONES
AND
BJ "TOLITS" FORBES
Tales from the Enchanted Kingdom
EXODUS
AN ERIK MATTI FILM
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WWW.EXODUSTHEMOVIE.COM
OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE 31ST METRO MANILA FILMFESTIVAL
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For every ticket purchase on January 1 get a FREE ticket to Enchanted Kingdom worth P500!
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EXODUS 11:00/1:10 /1:55/3:20 4:05/5:30/6:15/7:40 /8:25/ 9:50
SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 11:40 / 2:10 / 4:40 / 7:10 / 9:40
MULAWIN 11:40 / 2:10 / 4:40 / 7:10 / 9:40
ENTENG KABISOTE 2 10:40/12:25 1:30 / 2:10 / 3:55 / 4:00 / 5:40 / 6:30 / 7:25 / 9:30

GLOBE PLATINUM CINEMA
EXODUS 2:30 / 4:40 / 6:50 / 9:00
AKO, LEGAL WIFE 12:30 / 2:50 / 5:10 / 7:30 / 9:50
KUTOB 12:50 / 3:05 / 5:20 / 7:35 / 9:50
TERRORIST HUNTER 12:50 / 3:00 / 5:10 / 7:20 / 9:30

ALI MALL CINEMAS
❶ ENTENG KABISOTE 2 12:30 / 3:00 / 5:30 / 8:00
❷ MULAWIN 12:35 / 3:05 / 5:35 / 8:05
❸ KUTOB 11:40 / 1:55 / 4:10 / 6:25 / 8:40
❹ TERRORIST HUNTER 11:45 / 1:55 / 4:05 / 6:15 / 8:25
❺ AKO LEGAL WIFE 11:20 / 1:40 / 4:00 / 6:20 / 8:40
DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

ARANETA COLISEUM EVENTS
SPELLBOUND MAGIC SHOW Dec. 29 Thu.- Showtime 2 pm & 6 pm
WORLD SLASHER CUP January 17, 19 & 21

CENTER EVENTS
PROMO Get FREE 2006 Planners with every P500 purchase at Gateway Mall until January 31, 2006
BAZAAR Everything Christmas Holiday Bazaar ongoing until January 8 at Level 4 of Gateway Mall

LOG ON TO www.aranetacenter.net FOR MORE DETAILS OR TO SUBSCRIBE TO OUR WEEKLY E-MAIL ENTERTAINMENT UPDATES

ROUNDUP

Christmas champ

LOS ANGELES—"King Kong" and "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" battled for the four-day box office crown with the giant ape swiping the Christmas holiday prize.

"King Kong" took the No. 1 spot with $31.4 million, "Narnia" estimated $30.1 million.

Ticket sales at US and Canadian theaters, according to the official box office tracker: 1) "King Kong," $31.4M; 2) "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," $30.1M; 3) "Fun with Dick and Jane," $23.5M; 4) "Cheaper by the Dozen 2," $14.8M; 5) "The Family Stone," $10.9M; 6) "Memoirs of a Geisha," $10.2M; 7) "The Ringer," $8.4M; 8) "Rumor Has It," $7.5M; 9) "Wolf Creek," $5.9M; 10) "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire," $5.7M.AP

What risk?

SAN FRANCISCO—There was nothing to risk for Felicity Huffman in playing a man becoming a woman in "Transamerica."

"I'm not a beauty. It wasn't like I was risking anything," Huffman said in Sunday's San Francisco Chronicle. "What I risked was whether I could do it."

Huffman, 43, was nominated for two best-actress Golden Globes on Dec. 14—as Stanley/Bree in "Transamerica" and as the beleaguered mom Lynette in TV's "Desperate Housewives."

Splitsville

LOS ANGELES—Actor-comedian Mike Myers and his wife, Robin Ruzan, are ending their 12-year marriage, a spokeswoman said Friday.

"They remain committed and caring friends," publicist Ina Treciokas said in a statement.

Myers and Ruzan, a writer and actress, were married in May 1993. They have no children.

Oh, please

SAN ANTONIO—"Desperate Housewives" star Eva Longoria has denied making racial slurs after a car in which she was a passenger was stopped by police.

Longoria was in a car driven by San Antonio Spurs guard Tony Parker when the basketball player was cited for impeding traffic.

A police report said Longoria shouted from the car: "He's just a Mexican bike cop [who] wants your autograph."

Through her publicist, Longoria said, "I never ... made any comments about the officer being Mexican, as a Mexican myself." *AP*

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2005
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
B1
BUSINESS
Text us your feedback: inquirer biz name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)
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Website: www.inq7money.net
Editor Raul O. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Corrie S. Narisma

Laban, laban sa Petron Rev-X!
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X-pert sa makina, X-tra ang kita.

Minimum wage earners get tax reprieve

But non-payment hinged on success of VAT

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT OF Finance has approved the proposed exemption of minimum wage earners from withholding tax, a move aimed at temporarily easing the burden of low-income earners arising from the expansion of the coverage of the value-added tax (VAT).

The exemption will take effect starting Jan. 1, 2006.

But a finance official clarified that the withholding-tax exemption would only mean that the income tax liabilities withheld monthly from minimum wage earners would no longer be withheld; instead, they will have to pay the tax obligation only by the end of the fiscal year 2006, or on or before April 15, 2007.

"This is just an interim measure intended to give some relief to the public, particularly the minimum wage earners, so that they can cope with the VAT," the finance official said.

He said, however, that there was also a possibility that the government would no longer collect the income tax obligation of the minimum wage earners by the end of the fiscal year, especially if tax collection improves substantially because of the VAT Reform Law.

The VAT law expanded the coverage of the tax to include oil and electricity, among others, and will raise the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent by February next year.

Minimum wage earners are those whose monthly income is P5,000 or below, or whose annual income does not exceed P60,000. Minimum wage earners are also those whose daily pay is P325 or below.

Also covered by the withholding tax exemption are government employees under the salary grades 1 to 3.

The official said the Bureau of Internal Revenue was set to issue a revenue regulation (RR) covering the withholding tax exemption. The revenue regulation will be an amended version of RR No. 2-98, which gave two options for salaried individuals to pay their income tax liabilities: through regular withholding by employers, or through direct payment by the end of a fiscal year.

The coming revenue regulation will thus state the minimum wage earners are to pay their in-

MINIMUM/B2

Japan firms pessimistic on RP prospects

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE BUSINESS CONFIDENCE OF JAPANESE firms in the country plunged into negative at a -5.3 rating in December after improving to almost positive in the previous month, according to a monthly survey by the Japan External Trade Organization.

Jetro reported that Japanese companies and affiliates doing business in the country have kept a negative diffusion index for the country in the past eight consecutive months.

The agency said the Philippine rating reflected the firms' overall sentiment for the original members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which include Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore.

The aim of the survey is to provide up-to-date information on business conditions in the Asian economy to help companies develop more effective business strategies.

Jetro polls the companies to measure year-on-year changes in their business outlooks for the current month and the next two or three months ahead. The answers are expressed as DI, which is derived from the difference between the ratio of positive and negative responses.

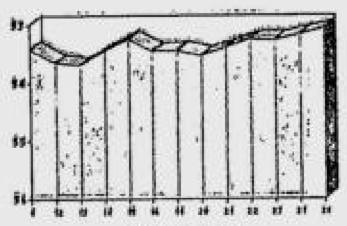
Firms were asked to compare earnings prospects, supply and demand, inventory, sales, prices and accounts receivable with the same period a year earlier.

Overall current business sentiment for the five Asean countries included in the survey was down 4.7 points in December, reflecting the worsened sentiment in Asean owing to growing concern among firms over stagnant consumer spending and increased cost bur-

JAPAN/B2

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P53.08 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 28, 2005

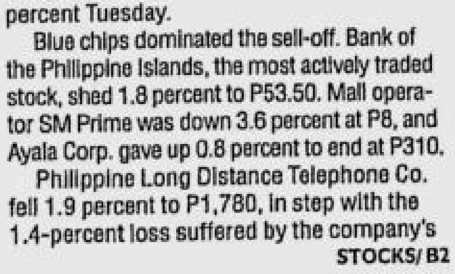
¥117.16 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 28, 2005

GOLD: $509.30-509.80

per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 28, 2005

STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks fall 1% on Wall St.'s losses

STOCKS SLIPPED LOWER YESTERDAY for the second straight session, weighed down by Wall Street's overnight losses, traders said.

The benchmark 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index fell 21.28 points, or one percent, to 2,067.32, after falling 1.1 percent Tuesday.

Blue chips dominated the sell-off. Bank of the Philippine Islands, the most actively traded stock, shed 1.8 percent to P53.50. Mall operator SM Prime was down 3.6 percent at P8, and Ayala Corp. gave up 0.8 percent to end at P310.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. fell 1.9 percent to P1,780, in step with the 1.4-percent loss suffered by the company's

STOCKS/B2

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Lucky Nokia Snaparazzi Winner!

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She chilled, she got snapped, and she enjoyed the Nseries experience at one of the many Nokia Hotspots. And she's also the lucky Nokia Snaparazzi winner of a trip for 5 to Singapore by getting a Nokia Nseries phone! Now, she can see more and do more with the Nseries in Singapore.

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 2680 Series of 2005

28 pre-need companies seen getting new licenses

Banks' foreign currency deposits reach $14.29B

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS SAID deposits in foreign currency deposit units (FCDUs) settled at $15.297 billion in the week ending Dec. 2, slightly decelerating from the previous week's figure amid heightened spending for the holidays.

In the previous week, ending Nov. 25, foreign currency deposits stood at $15.408 billion.

"FCDU deposits continued to be primarily held by resident corporate borrowers," the BSP said in a statement. The central bank added that resident corporate borrowers accounted for 93.98 percent, or P14.361 billion, of the total FDCU for the week.

The slight decline in FCDU deposits came with the reported rise in consumption during the holidays. The GIR is the amount of the country's total foreign currency holdings. It indicates the BSP's ability to cover the country's dollar requirements for imports and to protect the peso from depreciating.

In the meantime, the BSP said it was expecting the country's balance of payments position to post a surplus of $2.1 billion this year, exceeding the official target of only $860 million. The BOP posted a surplus of $18.1 billion in November, exceeding the projected $16 billion to $17 billion.

The BOP is the summary of the country's transactions with the rest of the world as measured by the net amount of foreign currency inflows and outflows.

Found compliant with SEC's reportorial, trust fund rules

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

TWENTY-EIGHT (28) PRE-NEED FIRMS HAVE qualified to continue selling pre-need plans next year, a report of the Securities and Exchange Commission showed.

The report indicated that 28 of the 33 pre-need firms that were granted dealer's licenses in 2005 had complied with the reportorial and trust fund requirements of the SEC.

The dealer's license allows a pre-need firm to sell plans.

Among the pre-need firms offering open-ended plans that qualified for renewal of license as of Nov. 30 were: Eduplan (Phils.) Inc., Eternal Plans Inc., Legacy Consolidated Plans Inc., Prudentialife Plans Inc. and Trusteeship Plans Inc.

Other regular pre-need companies that will be given license to continue selling securities next year are Ayala Plans Inc., Berkley International Plans Inc., City Plans Inc., Classic Plans Inc., Cocoplans Inc., First Country Plans Inc., First Union Plans Inc., Himlayang Pilipino Plans Inc., Ideal Pension Plans Corp., Loyola Plans Consolidated Inc., Manulife Financial Plans Inc., Mercantile Care Plans Inc., Millenium Plans Inc., Paz Memorial Life Plan Inc., Permanent Plans Inc., Philam Plans Inc., Primanila Plans Inc., Primeplan International Plan Inc., Provident Plans International Corp., Sunlife Financial Plans Inc., St.Peter Life Plan Inc. and Transnational Plans Inc.

The SEC said Pet Plans Inc. had complied with the reportorial requirements but its application for the renewal of its license was still being reviewed. The SEC is particularly looking at how the yields of its trust fund and the distribution of its assets were computed.

Pet Plans has a trust fund deficiency of about P181 million as of October for its education plans, the SEC said in a status report.

In the meantime, the SEC earlier said it was not ready to restore the license of troubled pre-need firm College Assurance Plan Philippines Inc. (CAP) to sell education plans.

This was the SEC's reaction when asked to comment on a Congress resolution urging the regulator to restore the suspended licenses of pre-need firms such as CAP, and Pacific Plans Inc.

SEC Chair Fe Barin said there were requirements that had to be met before a license could be granted. Failure to meet these, she added, meant a license could not be granted or renewed.

"We do recognize that there is a resolution but we can only function based on the provisions of the law that created us," Barin said. She said the SEC's actions were based on the Securities Regulation Code, which also provided the guidelines governing pre-need firms.

CAP's license to sell education plans was suspended by the SEC last year after it failed to meet capital and liquidity requirements to settle obligations to plan holders.

The House of Representatives in a resolution dated Dec. 5 urged the SEC to suspend its controversial rule or the "Actuarial Reserve Liability (ARL)," which requires pre-need firms to book reserves to settle liabilities to plan holders.

Congress said the ARL should be suspended pending consultations with concerned sectors, particularly on the drafting of a new formula.

Congress also urged the SEC to restore the licenses of these pre-need firms to help ease their cash flows. The SEC had already given PPI back its license.

Platinum Plans, whose petition for rehabilitation was granted by the Makati Regional Trial Court recently, has yet to apply for the renewal of its license with the SEC.

Not really by the minority

MINDANAWORLD

Joji Ilagan-Bian

THE GROUP OF COMMISSIONERS (WHERE I belong), which dissented to the Consultative Commission's recommendation to cancel the May 2007 election, submitted its collective position paper to Chair Jose V. Abueva.

Now known as "The Minority Report," the position paper explained the reasons behind our objection to Sections 7 and 8 of the Transitory Provisions, proposing the cancellation of the 2007 election.

Since its creation by President Macapagal-Arroyo, the Consultative Commission (ConCom), which was assigned to recommend amendments to the 1987 Constitution, has been having the burden of erasing the perception that it is a mere stamping pad of PGMA. Amidst questions on the legitimacy of her presidency, any move by PGMA to effect changes on the Constitution has been viewed with suspicion and that it was designed to benefit her and her political allies.

Under the leadership of Chair Abueva, we tried our best to perform our functions according to the mandate of the President's order. Considering that we were talking about the fundamental law of the land, we consulted the representatives of various sectors all throughout the country.

Those transitory provisions were not presented to the general membership of the ConCom until the last week of our deliberations. They were never exposed to public consultations undertaken by the ConCom in compliance with its mandate under Executive Order 453. The voting on the transitory positions was indecisive, for they were first rejected with a vote of 18 to 16, but revived over our objections by a vote of 22 to 19 the next day. The ConCom leadership rejected our plea to include our signed dissenting report in the final ConCom report. However, the President gave official cognizance to our dissenting report two days later.

We say that the proposal to cancel the 2007 election "could be construed as an attempt to entice our national and local officials to push for the passage of the revision of the constitution, in a myopic view that all our officials are only desirous of ensuring their political tenure."

It is noteworthy to mention that, save for one, all commissioners from Mindanao objected to the no-election provision.

The results of our nationwide consultation would show that the people were overwhelmingly clamoring for a change in governance—from a presidential-unitary government to parliamentary-federal system—and for the inclusion of trade end economic liberalization. We earnestly believe that had we included the "no-election" proposal in the consultations, the people's voice would have been a resounding "NO!" In short, they would want to exercise their right to choose a new set of leaders who will compose the Parliament.

Thus, our position paper is not really by the minority. It is by the people.

(Joji Ilagan-Bian is an advocate for Mindanao; ConCom member, vice chair of the Mindanao Commission of Women and National Corn Board; chair of the Mindanao TVET ; Mindanao representative, Export Development Council; chair, Joji Ilagan Foundation; former chair of the Mindanao Business Council. Email comments to jojibian2@yahoo.com)

MWC voted best managed firm

MANILA WATER WAS VOTED THE COUNTRY'S Best Managed Company—Small Cap Category in a survey conducted by Asiamoney, one of Asia's leading financial magazines, for their annual Best Managed Companies Awards.

The poll was participated in by senior equity research analysts and fund managers across the Asia Pacific.

According to Asiamoney, majority of the investors were impressed by Manila Water's track record of operating efficiency and ability to succeed in a regulated environment. In addition, the financial community highly regarded its excellent financial management skills which enabled the company to meet its financial objectives.

Manila Water earned this award only nine months after going public. It listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange in March and has since then shown remarkable achievements in operations and financial performance. Polled investors cited the company's active promotion of high corporate governance standards and transparency within the organization as one of the reasons for choosing Manila Water for the distinction.

"This award is an honor not only to the company but to the country as well. It proves the viability of a public-private sector partnership in a more demanding industry," said Manila Water president Antonino T. Aquino. "It is a stamp of approval by the investment community on the company's efforts to make Manila Water an efficient water service provider in the Philippines and within the Asian region."

2005 was an outstanding year for Manila Water. Earlier this year, the company said it had managed to bring down the level of systems losses to 36 percent, its lowest since it started operation in 1997. It is also expected to end the year with strong financial results having achieved a 47-percent growth in net income at the end of the third quarter this year.

Minimum wage earners . . .

From page B1

come tax liabilities through direct payment by the end of the fiscal year.

The source said the government would stand to lose some P500 million in potential revenue collection from the move to exempt minimum wage earners from withholding tax, if the government would decide not to collect the tax from them by the end of the fiscal year.

The official said President Macapagal-Arroyo gave instructions to the DOF to study the possibility of also granting middle-income earners some form of tax relief, considering that they are burdened more by the VAT than the low-income earning ones.

But he said that unlike the move to exempt minimum wage earners from withholding tax, granting middle-income earners a tax relief would need approval by Congress.

The DOF earlier said that it would be amenable to the plan of granting middle-income earners some form of tax relief if it achieves the expected additional tax collection from the VAT Reform law.

The government estimated that the new VAT law could raise at least P81.4 billion in additional revenues a year.

Japan firms . . .

From page B1

dens, Jetro said.

This sentiment stemmed from tighter monetary policy that governments in the region followed in the latter half of 2005 to contain inflation and stabilize currencies after continued oil price hikes, Jetro added.

The Philippines rated negative in the 10 months from June 2001 when Jetro started the monthly poll. The country's record bottomed at negative 40.9 in December 2001 and peaked at 22.9 in September 2004.

Jetro said the Philippine outlook DIs for two to three months ahead showed that sentiment on the country would further go down to negative 5.8.

Based on results of previous polls this year, the Philippines posted a DI of negative 1.9 in January, which dipped in the following months to as low as negative 8.6 percent in June.

Philippine-based respondents in the August survey included 208 firms engaged in businesses involving oil, chemicals, steel, metals, electric and electronic machinery, transportation machinery and other manufacturing concerns as well as construction, real estate, transport, communication, commerce, services and other non-manufacturing activities.

Stocks . . .

From page B1

American Depositary Receipts in New York Tuesday.

The market's retreat followed the one-percent losses by the Dow Jones Industrial Average and the Nasdaq Composite Index on Tuesday.

AB Capital Securities research director Jose Vistan said trading is winding down for the year.

"The thin value of trades indicates the absence of buying interest. Fund managers don't expect the market to make a significant move during these last trading sessions of the year," said Vistan.

Today will be the last trading day for 2005, with financial markets closed Friday for a public holiday.

All sectoral indicators retreated, except the oil subindex, which was unchanged. Decliners led gainers 39 to 22, while 40 stocks were unchanged.

Vistan said fund managers were already satisfied with their positions in the market, anchored on next year's upbeat outlook both on the macroeconomic and corporate fronts. *AP*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 28, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	33.5	34	33.5	34	53,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	54	54	53	53.5	5,746,000
China Banking Corp.	615	620	615	620	1,000
Citystate Savings Bank	18	18.25	18	18.25	123,000
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	260,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	56.5	57	56.5	57	3,500
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	32.5	32.5	31.5	32	674,100
Philippine National Bank	31.5	31.5	31	31	15,000
Phil. Savings Bank	35	35	35	35	6,800
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14	14	14	14	1,000
Security Bank Corp.	33.5	33.5	33.5	33.5	15,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	32	32	32	32	3,100
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Manulife Financial Corp.	3050	3050	3040	3040	360
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	12,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2070	2070	2070	2070	190
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.93	0.93	0.91	0.93	670,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	715	720	715	720	25,320
Ipeople Inc.	2.9	2.95	2.9	2.95	60,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.046	0.047	0.045	0.047	1,300,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.4	1,201,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1810	1810	1780	1780	17,220
Ivantage Corp.	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	1,000,000
Philweb Corp.	0.014	0.015	0.014	0.015	50,000,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	14.25	14.5	14.25	14.5	13,200
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.3	6.4	6.3	6.3	1,036,000
Petron Corp.	4.45	4.5	4.45	4.5	269,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.96	0.96	0.95	0.95	150,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	350,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	9.4	9.4	9.2	9.3	445,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.32	1.36	1.32	1.36	333,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.76	0.77	0.76	0.76	6,990,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	0.79	0.8	0.79	0.8	30,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.25	4.4	4.25	4.35	3,881,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	10,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	22.75	23	22.75	23	47,700
Jollibee Foods Corp.	42	42	40	40	85,500
Pancake House Inc.	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.8	109,000
San Miguel Corp. A	64.5	65	64.5	64.5	159,900
San Miguel Corp. B	87	88	87	88	42,700
Universal Robina Corp.	18.75	18.75	18.75	18.75	5,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	690,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	312.5	312.5	307.5	310	267,060
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43	320,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	4,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	7,600,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.08	2.08	2.06	2.06	75,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.04	1.46	1.04	1.44	25,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9	9	9	9	30,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.12	1.12	1.1	1.1	3,605,000
A Brown Co. Inc.	0.99	0.99	0.93	0.93	210,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.175	0.18	0.17	0.175	2,390,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.31	0.32	0.31	0.32	940,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.05	3.15	2.95	2.95	2,013,000
Fil-Estate Corp.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	30,000
F&J Prince Holdings Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	20,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	48.5	49	48	48.5	415,900
Global Equities Inc.	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	100,000
Jardine Davies Inc.	18.25	18.25	18	18	6,500
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.3	1,025,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.017	0.017	0.017	0.017	1,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.24	1.24	1.22	1.22	11,564,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.34	8,470,000
Paxys Inc.	5.9	6	5.9	6	112,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	319,000
SM Investments Corp.	240	242	240	240	51,650
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.065	1,500,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	100,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Metro Alliance Holdings	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	10,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	50,000
Pryce Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	10,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1	1	0.99	1	1,730,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	4,223,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp (Pdr)	13	13.25	13	13.25	171,700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series K	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	500
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	9.6	9.7	9.6	9.7	177,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9.7	9.7	9.6	9.6	662,000
C&P Homes Inc.	1.9	1.9	1.88	1.88	460,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	1,260,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.38	1.38	1.38	1.38	937,000
Fil-Estate Land, Inc.	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	80,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	340,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	23,000
SM Development Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	130,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8.1	8.2	8	8	2,798,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co., Inc.B	0.92	0.92	0.92	0.92	90,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5.7	5.7	5.6	5.6	125,000
Benguet Corp. A	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.2	25,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	15,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.215	0.22	0.215	0.215	2,710,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.245	460,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	17,500,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.029	0.029	0.028	0.028	13,500,000
Omico Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.005	0.0055	71,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.34	1.36	1.34	1.36	1,366,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.72	1.74	1.72	1.74	4,718,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	28	29	27.5	29	525,600
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	100,000
OIL					
Interport Res.	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	17,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	5,000,000
	SHARES				VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	6,914,650				336,125,290.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	117,486,950				270,593,150.00
PRO	6,690,000				31,877,360.00
Mining	112,134,600				27,454,030.00
OIL	22,000,000				92,800.00
GRAND TOTALS:	265,226,200				666,142,630.00
Bank & Fin Svc	603.82				DOWN 11.77
Comm'l & Ind'l	3,235.68				DOWN 28.40
PRO	832.14				DOWN 17.91
Mining	2,777.76				DOWN 15.70
OIL	2.82				UNCH 0.00
SME	100.00				UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	1,257.11				DOWN 10.94
Composite	2,067.32				DOWN 21.28

NO. OF ADVANCES: 22, NO. OF DECLINES: 39, NO. OF UNCHANGED: 40, NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 101, NO. OF TRADES: 1,941

DISCLOSURES

INTERNATIONAL Container Terminal Services Inc. approved the conversion of ICTSI advances to its subsidiaries, ICTSI Warehousing Inc. (IWI) and ICTSI Ltd., into deposit for future subscription.

***

ENRIQUE Gomez of **San Miguel Corp.** sold 9,522 SMC Class B shares last Dec. 23.

***

BALACBAC Resources and Holdings Co. Inc. entered into an agreement with the officers of the corporation in relation to the payment of their retirement benefits.

***

SEMIRARA Mining Corp. repurchased on Dec. 27 a total of 209,200 shares: 99,200 shares at P28.00 each and 110,000 shares at P28.50 each.

***

A BROWN Co. Inc. purchased on Dec 27 a total of 160,000 BRN shares: 70,000 shares at P0.97 each and 90,000 shares at P0.98 each. ***Compiled by Chona Galang, PDI Research***

CURRENCIES

December 28, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.845094	1.000000	53.2090
Japan	Yen	0.007199	0.008519	0.4533
United Kingdom	Pound	1.460407	1.728100	91.9505
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.109002	0.128982	6.8630
Switzerland	Franc	0.641536	0.759129	40.3925
Canada	Dollar	0.720762	0.852878	45.3808
Singapore	Dollar	0.506712	0.599592	31.9037
Australia	Dollar	0.613855	0.726375	38.6497
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.242164	2.653153	141.1716
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.225353	0.266660	14.1887
Brunei	Dollar	0.505197	0.597800	31.8083
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000086	0.000102	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.020647	0.024432	1.3000
UAE	Dirham	0.230095	0.272272	14.4873
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.183300	62.9622
Argentina	Peso	0.279463	0.330688	17.5956
Brazil	Real	0.358516	0.424232	22.5730
Denmark	Kroner	0.134038	0.158607	8.4393
India	Rupee	0.018710	0.022139	1.1780
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.223611	0.264599	14.0790
Mexico	New Peso	0.078610	0.093019	4.9494
New Zealand	Dollar	0.570008	0.674491	35.8890
Norway	Kroner	0.124700	0.147558	7.8514
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014146	0.016739	0.8907
South Africa	Rand	0.133757	0.158275	8.4217
Korea	Won	0.000835	0.000988	0.0526
Sweden	Kroner	0.105842	0.125243	6.6641
Syria	Pound	0.016280	0.019264	1.0250
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025540	0.030221	1.6080
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000394	0.000466	0.0248

Prices of basic commodities stable, says DTI

Slight increases due to seasonal rise in demand

By Ronnel W. Domingo

TRADE SECRETARY PETER B. FAVILA said prices of most basic commodities remained stable relative to the levels prior to the implementation of the reformed value-added tax law.

Citing government monitoring reports, Favila said prices of some products went up five to six weeks after the start of the VAT implementation but this was due to the seasonal rise in demand.

The trade chief chairs the National Price Coordination Council, which groups representatives from other agencies like the Department of Agriculture and from industry and retail groups.

Citing a DA study on the movement of prices before and after Nov. 1 when the VAT law took effect, Favila said prices of most agri-fishery commodities in Metro Manila remained at pre-RVAT levels.

In Metro Manila, ordinary rice can still be bought at P21 a kilo; bangus and tilapia, at about P70; cabbage and eggplant, at about P40; chicken, at about P100, and pork at P140.

"There are several exceptions like the prices of highland vegetables such as lettuce, cauliflower, broccoli and carrot, which went up in the first week of November," he said.

At the same time, prices of lowland vegetables such as *sitaw, ampalaya*, eggplant and tomato went up due to low supply.

Prices of ordinary rice and bangus dropped in the first two weeks of the VAT law.

As for market centers in the provinces, Favila said prices of most agri-fishery goods were stable, except for slight increases in the prices of special rice in Regions 1 and 2; ordinary rice in Regions 10, 12 and the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao; chicken in Region 4; bangus in Region 11; and highland vegetables in Regions 1, 4 and 5.

There were decreases in the prices of lowland vegetables in Regions 3, 7, 8 and 11 as well as bangus in Regions 5 and 7.

But prices remained generally stable considering that prices went back to their pre-RVAT levels in late November, Favila said.

As for the effect of the high fuel cost on the retail prices of basic goods, Favila said the study showed there was no significant effect since expenses attributed to fuel and oil accounted for only 2 percent to 5 percent of the total cost of goods.

Among the products that showed increases in prices during the holidays were *bangus* in Regions 2 and 6; *tilapia* in Region 5; lowland vegetables in Cordillera and Regions 2, 3 and 5; highland vegetables in Regions 2, 9, 11, 12 and ARMM.

Manufacturing output up 3.4% in Oct.

By Michelle V. Remo

THE TOTAL OUTPUT OF THE MANUFACTURING sector, as measured by the volume of production index (VoPI), rose 4.6 percent in October from year-ago level, the National Statistics Office reported yesterday.

"Sectors that reported substantial increases in production were furniture and fixtures, petroleum products, chemical products, miscellaneous manufactures and food manufacturing," the NSO said in its report on the Monthly Integrated Survey of Selected Industries (MISSI).

The 4.5-percent growth in the volume of production was a complete turnaround from the 4.5-percent year-on-year drop recorded in September.

The NSO also reported that the volume of net sales slightly grew by 0.5 percent in October, recovering from the 3.3-percent drop in September.

The Value of Production Index (VaPI), which measures output in value terms, also posted growth. VaPI picked up 13.9 percent in October from a year ago, brought largely by the increase in the value of produced petroleum products which increased 53.2 percent.

Double-digit growth in the value of production were also recorded in the following sectors: chemical products, furniture and fixtures, miscellaneous manufactures, electrical machinery, food manufacturing and textiles, the NSO said.

The value of net sales grew 8.7 percent during the month, the NSO said.

The Producer's Price Index (PPI), which measures the increase in the prices of goods bought by businesses, hit 13.7 percent in October, the NSO further reported. This was brought largely by double-digit increase in the cost of petroleum, machinery (excluding electrical), publishing and printing, basic metals, and electrical machinery.

The NSO, likewise, reported yesterday that the average capacity utilization of firms in the manufacturing sector stood at 80.4 percent in October.

It said 12.4 percent of manufacturing firms recorded a capacity utilization rate of 90 to 100 percent; 53.9 percent hit between 70 and 89 percent, and 33.7 percent registered below 70-percent capacity utilization rate.

The NSO said that the Missi for October covered 463 sample establishments.

Magnolia lines up new products

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

MAGNOLIA INC., THE DAIRY UNIT OF SAN Miguel Pure Foods Co. Inc., has lined up new affordable brands and repackaged existing products to boost market share.

Magnolia is introducing in the coming year a butter blend spread, a new chocolate milk drink and various bread fillings.

The company is also repackaging its existing brands with an end in view of lowering their selling prices. It has, for instance, started selling "Cheezee" and "Star" in sachets.

"Price and value are key priorities today. We are making available to the market new and innovative products of the highest quality in different price ranges," San Miguel president Ramon S. Ang said.

"With the smaller innovative packs, our consumers get to sample the same quality products at lower cost," Magnolia marketing manager Regi Baylosis explained.

Other San Miguel food units have adopted the same packaging strategy. Purefoods' popular "Supremo Cane Vinegar," previously available only in plastic bottles, is now being sold in sachets and retort pouches.

"The harsher economic environment has sharpened our focus on becoming a better business," Ang stressed.

LTO collection seen to hit P9.4B

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE HAS set a modest collection target of P9.4 billion for 2006.

The amount is only 3 percent higher than its 2005 target of P9.08 billion.

LTO chief Anneli Lontoc said that in the first 10 months, the agency already raised P8.9 billion from fees and charges.

Lontoc said the full-year collection could reach at least P9.5 billion this year.

The LTO, however, said it preferred to be conservative in making its projections.

The LTO is seeking a budget of P1.27 billion for 2006. Lontoc said the amount was only P50 million higher than this year's budget.

The additional amount, she said, would be used to renovate the LTO offices.

Lontoc explained the increase in the agency's collection this year had been slower that in the previous periods because 2004 was the last year of the implementation of the road users' tax.

The road users tax or the Motor Vehicle Users' Charge required motorists to pay a steadily increasing vehicle registration fee for four years starting 2001.

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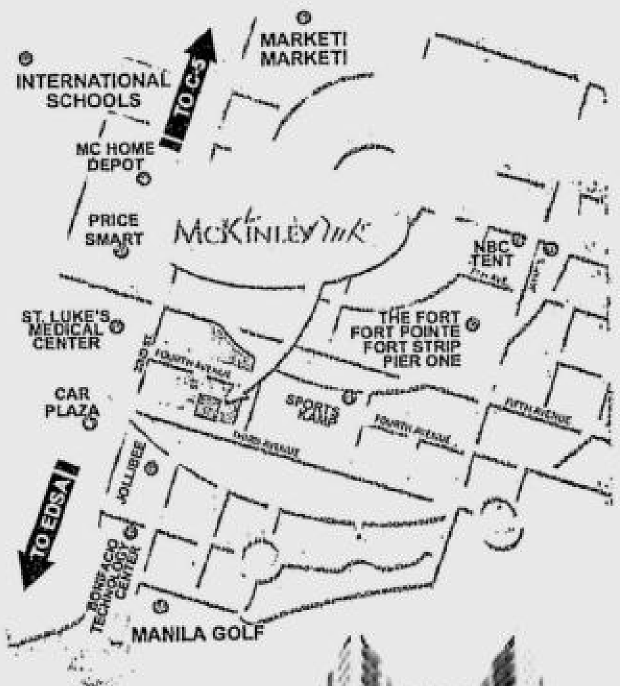

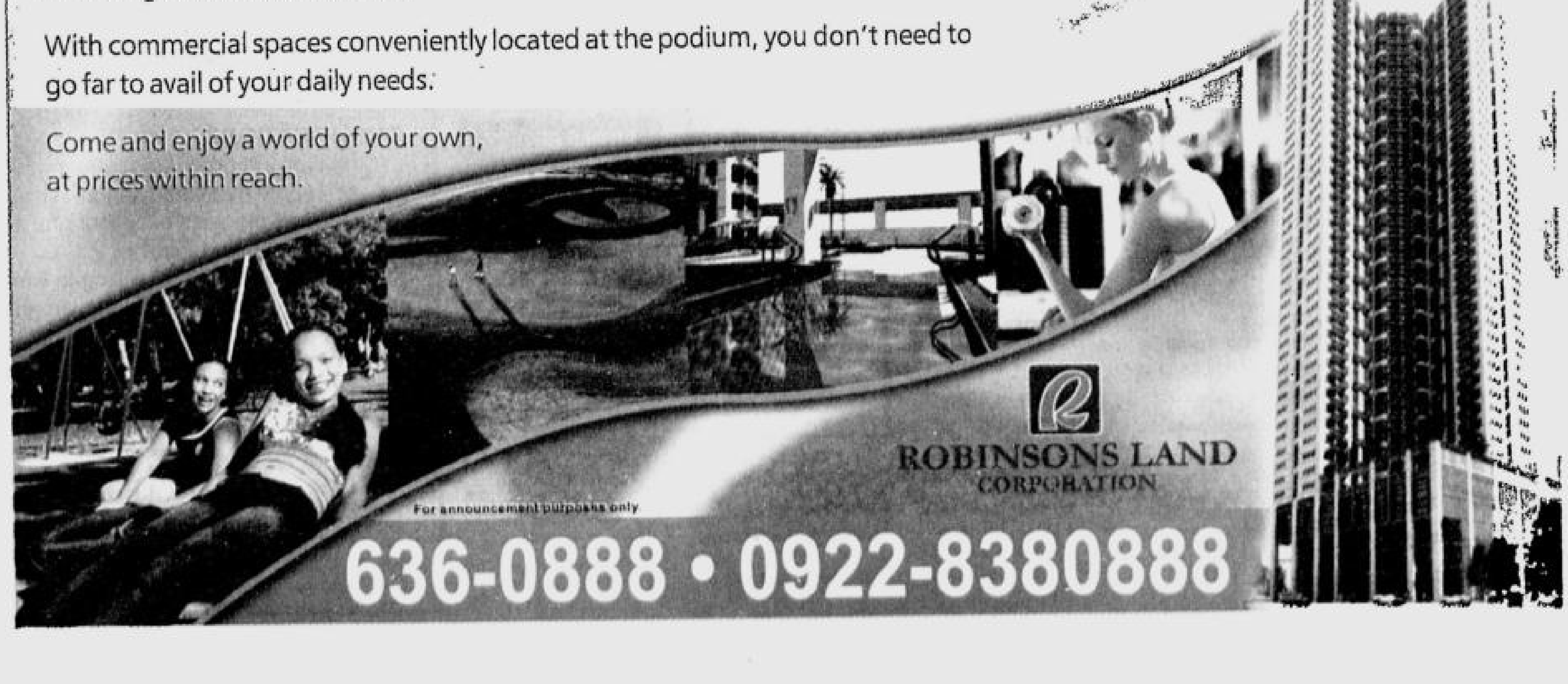
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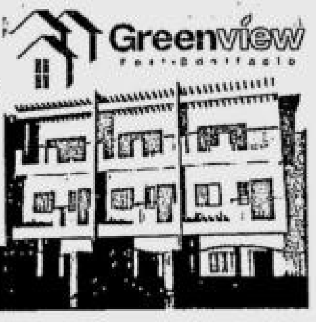

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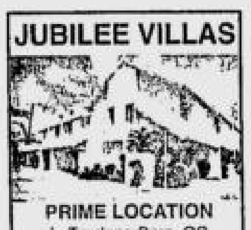

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is given that the estate of the late ROSITA MANGAO nee FLORES, who died intestate, was extrajudicially settled by her heirs before Notary Public Atty. Joaquin M. Chua of Manila , per Doc. No 46, Page No. 11, Book No. X. Series of 2005.
(PDI- Decx. 15, 22 & 29, 2005)

Notice of Self-adjudication by Geminiano Medalla of the estate of Trinidad Medalla Doc#153, Page#32, Book#II, Series of 2005 before Notary Public Rene Q. Pahulayan of Sto. Tomas Batangas (PDI-Dec.15,22&29,2005)

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that AYALA LAND, INC. Certificate No. 08211124 for One Hundred One Thousand One Hundred Ninety One (101,191) shares issued in the name of JOSE TANSO was reported loss. If one year from December 14, 2005 no advised claim is presented to the company, this certificate will be considered null and void and a new certificate will be issued in lieu thereof
(PDI - Dec. 15, 22 & 29, 2005)

Notice is hereby given that Club Filipino stock certificate No. 1947 for one (1) share issued to Elvira A. Baluyut was reported lost. If no contest received, new certificate will be issued.
(PDI-Dec. 15, 22 & 29, 2005)

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
REGIONAL OFFICE NO. VIII
PAWING, PALO, LEYTE
Tel. Nos. (053-323-3075, 323-3084)
Fax No. 053-323-3061

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR REGISTRATION/ELIGIBILITY & TO BID
PROCUREMENT OF SECURITY SERVICES FOR NFA REGION VIII

The National Food Authority (NFA) invites all interested Private Security Agencies to register, apply for eligibility and to bid for provision of Security Services for Calendar Year 2006 at NFA Regional Office No. VIII. The service contract to be bid shall be divided into lots with one province treated as one (1) Lot, to wit:

LOT NO.	PROVINCE	NO. OF SG'S	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT
1	NORTHERN LEYTE	24	P 3,068,640.00
2	SOUTHERN LEYTE	10	1,278,600.00
3	BILIRAN	4	511,440.00
4	WESTERN SAMAR	9	1,150,740.00
5	NORTHERN SAMAR	19	2,429,340.00
6	EASTERN SAMAR	12	1,534,320.00
	TOTAL	78	P 9,973,080.00

The application forms, eligibility requirements and other bid documents shall be obtained from the Regional Bids and Award Committee (RBAC) Secretariat after payment of a non-transferable/non-refundable bidding fee of Seven Thousand Five Hundred Pesos (P7,500.00). The schedule of bidding activities are as follows:

Date	Activity
Jan. 5-16, 2006 (8:00 am – 5:00 pm)	Issuance of Registration, Eligibility and Bid Documents (NFA-ROVIII)
Jan. 19, 2006 (5:00 pm)	Deadline for Submission of Required Registration & Eligibility Documents
Jan. 25, 2006 (8:00 am – 5:00 pm)	Issuance of Certificate of Registration & Notice of Eligibility
Jan. 26, 2006 (2:00 pm)	Pre-Bidding Conference (NFA-RO8 Conf. Rm)
Feb. 7, 2006 (9:30 am)	Submission & Opening of Bids (NFA-RO8 Conference Rm)

A Special Power of Attorney (SPA) issued by the Prospective Bidder Owner (for sole ownership) and/or resolution from the Board authorizing their representative (for Corporations) to purchase the bid documents, to sign for and behalf of the owner/corporation whatever documents relative to the bidding and to attend the pre-bidding conference and during the opening of the bids shall be required.

NFA reserves the right to reject any or all bids to waive any formality/informality of the bids, received and to accept only such Bids which are advantageous to the National Food Authority.

(Sgd.) **ANTONIO J. ADORABLE**
Asst. Regional Manager II/
Chairman-RBAC, NFA-ROVIII

(PDI–Dec. 29, 2005 & Jan. 4, 2006)

BAGUIO WATER DISTRICT
"WE SERVE"

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Baguio Water District, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for the hereunder contract:

Name of Contract	*Installation of the remaining piping works for the rehabilitation and expansion of the Baguio Water System (Aus-AID Project)*
Location	*Baguio City*
Brief Description	*The remaining piping works to be undertaken involves the installation of pipelines (50mm-400mm diameter), 14,952 LM; Gate valves, 38 units; Blow-off valve assemblies, 19 units; Air release valves, 7 units; Road pavement restoration works, 2,627 cu.m.; Pressure reducing valve assemblies, 56 units; Service taps, 1,083 units at various sub-systems of the Baguio Water District namely subsystems 4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16.*

Approved Budget for the Sub-systems (ABC):

Sub-system 4	P3,171,381.54	Sub-system 11	P7,122,484.70
Sub-system 7	P3,443,776.34	Sub-system 13	P7,088,218.08
Sub-system 8	P3,147,209.77	Sub-system 14	P3,911,091.48
Sub-system 10	P4,768,085.12	Sub-system 16	P7,096,870.85

Note: to be awarded individually or per-sub-system

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB License applicable to the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least 50% of the ABC, and have key personnel and equipment (listed in the Eligibility Forms) available for the prosecution of the contract. The BAC will use non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids. The BAC will conduct post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid.

All participants relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The schedule of BAC is as follows:

BAC Activities	Schedule
1. Receipt from prospective bidders of Letters of Intent (LOI) including Application for Eligibility	January 19-25, 2006
2. Receipt of Eligibility Requirements by the BAC	February 23, 2006
3. Notice of Results of Eligibility Check	March 11-17, 2006

The BAC will issue to prospective bidders Eligibility Forms at the Baguio Water District, Purok BWD, 003 Bgy. Marcoville, Baguio City, upon their submission of a LOI, and upon their payment of a non-refundable amount of Two Thousand Pesos (P2,000.00) to the Baguio Water District Cashier. Prospective bidders shall submit the Eligibility Requirements to the BAC at the said dates They may also obtain the results of the Eligibility Check by the BAC at the same address.

The BAC will issue Bidding Documents only to bidders declared by the BAC to be eligible for this particular bidding.

The Baguio Water District assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of their bids.

The Baguio Water District reserves the right to reject any and all bids, declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract as provided for under pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184.

(Sgd.) Engr. **SALVADOR M. ROYECA**
BAC – Projects Chairman

BWD Compound, Utility Road, Baguio City 2600, Philippines
Telephones 442-6539, 442-4228; 442-4929, 442-6463, Fax No. 442-3456

(PDI-Dec 29 2005 & Jan 5 2006)

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DepED

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http://www.deped.gov.ph; deped_procurementservice@yahoo.com
Direct Line: 636-65-43 / Telefax: 636-65-42 Trunk Line: 632-13-61 Locals: 2085/2115

Ref. No.: PS-05-11-497

Call for Submission of English and Filipino Textbooks and Teacher's Manuals

The Department of Education is inviting interested publishers to submit copies of camera-ready materials for their series of textbooks and accompanying teacher's manuals for:

- ■ **English** Grades 1 to 6 and First to Fourth Year high school intended for use in public schools nationwide starting SY 2007-2008; and
- ■ **Filipino** Grades 1 to 6 and First to Fourth Year high school intended for use in public schools nationwide starting SY 2008-2009

All submitted materials will undergo an evaluation process in four levels:

- ■ Level 1 to test completeness of coverage, organization, and internal consistency;
- ■ Level 2 to check accuracy of facts and information, integrity of concepts, and sequence of learning concepts;
- ■ Level 3 to test the appropriateness of the language and visuals used; and
- ■ Level 4 to ensure correct grammar and syntax

The evaluation result will either be for Major Revision or Minor Revision. Content evaluation will not be on a Pass/Fail basis and therefore does not constitute pre-qualification.

Publishers will pay an evaluation fee of thirty thousand pesos (P30,000.00) for each set of textbook and teacher's manual for Grades 1 to 2 and forty thousand pesos (P40,000.00) for each set of textbook and teacher's manual for Grades 3 to 6 and First to Fourth Year. The evaluation fees, which will be used to defray expenses for service fees, transportation, and board and lodging of evaluators, may be paid either in cash or manager's check.

Publishers will be given a copy of the recommendation of the evaluators at the different levels which will serve as basis for revising the materials prior to submission for bidding. All materials – even those requiring major revisions – may be submitted when bids are tendered as scheduled. Content evaluation under the bidding will then determine the completeness and accuracy of the implementation of the revisions for those recommended for minor revisions. For those recommended with major revisions, the material will undergo the four levels of evaluation.

The materials for English and Filipino should be submitted to the DepED-Instructional Materials Council Secretariat (IMCS), 5th Floor Mabini Bldg., DepED Complex, Meralco Avenue, Pasig City starting **January 16, 2006 but not later than January 20, 2006**.

In order to get a soft copy of the Learning Competencies and the Textbook Call Guidelines, bring a blank compact disk at the DepED-IMCS starting December 27, 2005. For more information, please contact Ms. Daisy Asuncion O. Santos or Ms. Nonie Barraquias at 634-1054 or 631-9294.

For your information and guidance.

(Sgd.) **ATTY. CAMILO MIGUEL MONTESA**
Bids and Awards Committee Chair

(PDI–Dec. 22 & 29, 2005)

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
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OBITUARIES

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Funeral Home and Crematory
845-2334 to 38; 845-2440

"I am the Resurrection; whoever believes in Me,
though he die, shall live."
John 11:25

"Mommy"

Angeles Bustamante Batar

of Caloocan City

*Loving wife of the late **Engineer Mariano A. Batar***
*mother of **Ma. Lourdes Batar-Recente** and **Romeo P. Recente**,*
***Ma. Imelda B. Batar**,*
***Jose Severo B. Batar** and **Angeli Gado-Batar**;*
*grandmother of **Kaiser Emmanuel B. Recente** and **Jose Angelo B. Batar**,*

has peacefully joined her Creator on December 27, 2005 at the age of 74.

Mommy's remains lie in state at the Floresco Funeral Homes,
511 A. Mabini St., Poblacion, Caloocan City.

Interment will be on Saturday, December 31, 2005 at the
Eternal Gardens after the 9:00 a.m. Mass.

"Exegi monumentum aere perennius" ... (Horace)
(I have built a monument more lasting than bronze)

JOSE LUIS A. LEDESMA

Son of **Jose Benedicto (†)** and **Alegre (†)**;
brother of **Juan Basco (†)**,

peacefully joined the Lord on December 25, 2005. He was 64.

His wife **Evelyn Santayana**; children **Lisa Aurea, Pia Ma., Jose Rafael**; sisters **Ma. Lourdes (Ernesto III), Ma. Jesusa** and **Ma. Socorro (Alfredo)**, request relatives, friends and readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Don Bosco Faith Chapel, Makati City.

Interment will be on Friday, December 30, 2005 at Heritage Park, Fort Bonifacio after the 2:00 p.m. Mass at the Don Bosco Church, Makati City.

"For God
so loved the
world, that
He gave His
only
begotten
Son, that
whoever
believes in
Him shall
not perish
but have
everlasting
life."
John 3:16

"Only goodness and love will pursue me all the days of my life;
I will dwell in the house of the Lord for years to come..." – **Psalm 23:6**

LILY TY SY

faithful wife of **JUAN SY SR. (†)**
and loving mother to many,

Peacefully joined our Lord on December 27, 2005 at the age of 70.

She will be dearly missed by her children **Jennifer** and **Hay Sui Ng**; **Josephina** and **Carlos Gono**; **Jeannette** and **Samuel Westelman**; **Jonathan** and **Leilani**; **Juan Jr.** and **Jemima**; grandchildren **Janini, Gian, Geo, Jaja, Lala, Luis, Lia, Sammie, Matt, Timmy, Tiffy, Teddy** and **Toby.**

Her body lies in state at Chapel A, La Funeraria Paz, Araneta Ave., Quezon City.

Interment will be on Tuesday, January 03, 2006 at the Chinese Cemetery, Manila.

DEATH NOTICE

MARIO PUÑADO-PAN
of Buyo, Goa, Camarines Sur

Died on Dec. 20, 2005 at the age of 84.

Interment will be on Dec. 30, 2005 at 9 a.m. at Goa Catholic Cemetery, Goa, Camarines Sur.

Beatriz A. Casimiro

Peacefully joined her Lord & Creator on December 14, 2005 at the age of 78.

Her loving family:
parents: **Wenceslao Alano (+) & Maura Juan Alano (+)**;
his beloved husband **(Ret.) Judge Honesto R. Casimiro**
children: **Angelica C. Tresatayawed** and her husband **Satis, Edna C. Casupang** and her husband **Renato, Gwendolyn C. Reyes** and her husband **Steve, Manuel A. Casimiro** and his wife **Susan, Marissa C. Le** and her husband **Dinh, Justino A. Casimiro** and her wife **Linda,** and **Alma C. Pagdatoon** and her husband **Vicente II.**
16 grandchildren: **Anchale, Alice, Precious, Maricar, Michael, Kristine, Kaiser, Melody, Jessica, Carlo, Karen, Bea, Vincent, Alvic, Rizha** and **Richelle,** brother, **Peping Alano**; two sisters **Jinny Alano & Pilar Perez**
and relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.
Her remains were laid to rest at the South Park Cemetery, Houston Texas, U.S.A.

"I will bless you and make your name great,
and you shall be a blessing."
Genesis 12:2

ENGR. AMBROSIO RIMANDO FLORES

"Amby"

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord
on December 26, 2005 at the age of 98.

His loving wife **Teresa** (†); children **Jun & Cristi, Jimmy** (†), **Eduardo** (†) **& Blaire, Douglas & Nene, Nora, Tess & Reg Tuazon, Nap & Lucille, Irene & Manny Reyes, Bert & Jovy, Mel & Gerry Tumang, Amy & Nolet Quiason, Rod & Edith, Lourdes** (†), **Jopay & Geedee Singh, Bong & Emma**; grandchildren, great grandchildren; brothers, **Gerardo** (†), **Camilo, Venancio, Melchor, Jeremias**; sisters **Honorata** (†), **Teofila, Adelina** (†), **Felicidad**; relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

Interment will be on Thursday, January 5, 2006 at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque after the 8:00 a.m. Mass at Funeraria Paz, Araneta where his remains lie in state.

An obituary with a picture
can be a fitting tribute to your
departed loved one.

Always caring...
INQUIRER OBITUARIES

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate;
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT • MESSAGE OF THANKS •
DEATH ANNIVERSARY • REQUIEMS •
FREE OBIT DESIGN

The Board of Commissioners, Officers and Staff of
HOUSING AND LAND USE REGULATORY BOARD
ANNOUNCE WITH DEEP SORROW
THE PASSING OF THEIR COMMISSIONER

ATTY. FRANCISCO LEDESMA DAGÑALAN

His body lies in state at the
St. Peter Chapels, 296 Quezon Avenue, Q. C.
Interment will be on Saturday, December 31, 2005,
at the Everest Memorial Park, Susana Heights,
Muntinlupa after the 8:00 am Requiem Mass
at San Lorenzo Ruiz Chapel of St. Peter, Q.C.

CARD OF THANKS

ROGELIO M. CASTAÑEDA

June 25, 1937 - December 18, 2005

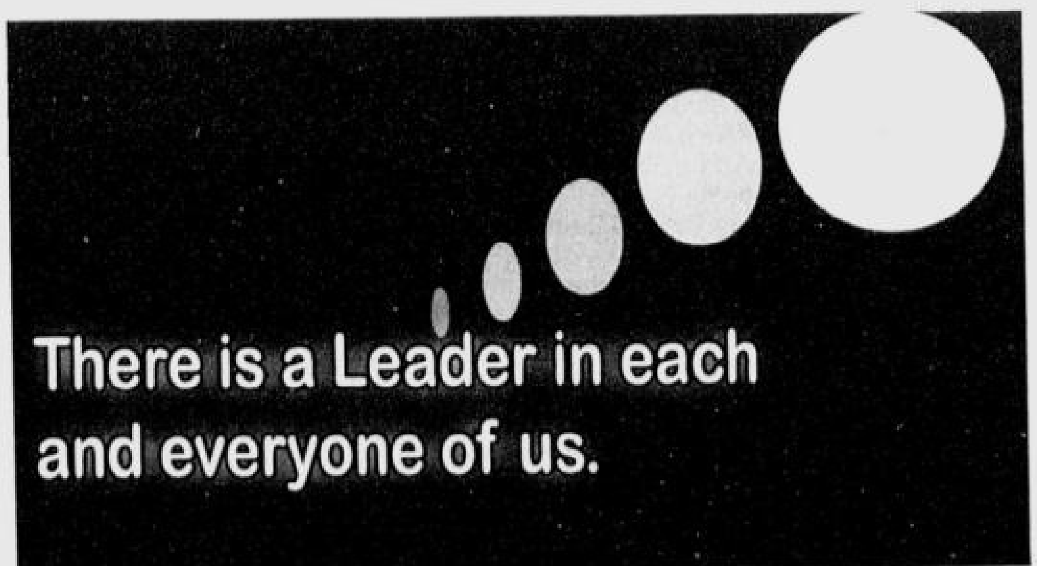
His beloved wife **Nora**, children **Leo & Bless, Annie & Raul, Winnie & Mario** and **Marcia**;
grandchildren: **Kaila, Margaux** and **Joshua**
wish to thank all who have condoled us
in our bereavement. Your sympathy, Mass cards,
flower offerings and most especially your kind
words of consolation have greatly eased our pain
at the loss of our loved one.

CLASSIFIEDS

NFA rice for Calapan flood victims

THE NATIONAL FOOD Authority has distributed a total of 2,150 bags of rice for relief assistance to the residents displaced by the flood that hit Calapan City and other parts of Oriental Mindoro The NFA released the rice for calamity victims through relief agencies such as the Provincial and City Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC), Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), NGOs and LGUs, as well as through legislators and other government agencies.

The Philippine National Red Cross received bulk of the rice releases with 800 bags while the provincial and city disaster coordinating centers received 550 and 200 bags, respectively. The rest were released to the DSWD, the local government of Calapan City and their legislators and to the Abion Movement, a civic organization based in the province. Calapan City and some parts of Mindoro Oriental had been flooded since the first week of December, aggravated further when the dams protecting the city burst. For more information on NFA programs, the public may send their inquiries via the Text NFA Program through mobile number 0917-6210927.



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Republic of the Philippines
ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION FOR AUTHORITY TO IMPLEMENT 2006 MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS, WITH PRAYER FOR PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY

ERC CASE NO. 2005-280 MC

ANGELES ELECTRIC CORPORATION (AEC),
Applicant.
x-------------------------------x

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

Notice is hereby given of the filing by Angeles Electric Corporation (AEC), on September 30, 2005, of an application for authority to implement 2006 proposed major capital projects with prayer for provisional authority pursuant to the provisions of Republic Act No. 9136 (Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001).

The Commission has set the application for hearing on January 12, 2006 at two o'clock in the afternoon (2:00 P.M.) at the ERC Hearing Room, 15th Floor, Pacific Center Bldg., San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City

All interested parties who may wish to comment on or oppose the said application should file their comments and/or oppositions on or before the date of hearing. Such parties who may wish to have the details of the application and who shall have manifested to the Commission their desire and intention to participate actively in the proceedings, may request that before the date of hearing, they may be furnished with copies of the application by the applicant, which is hereby directed to furnish the parties making such request with copies of the application and its attachments. Likewise, any such party may examine the application and other pertinent records filed with the Commission during the usual office hours.

WITNESS, the Honorable **RODOLFO B. ALBANO, JR.**, Chairman, and the Honorable Commissioners **OLIVER B. BUTALID** and **RAUF A. TAN** this 18th day of November 2005 in Pasig City

(Sgd.) **MARIA TERESA A.R. CASTAÑEDA**
Executive Director III

(PDI- Dec 29 2005)

Japan to bid sayonara to deflation in 2006

Economy finally picking up after decade-long slumber

TOKYO—AFTER ALMOST EIGHT years of falling consumer prices, 2006 looks set to be the year that Japan says 'sayonara' to deflation as the world's number two economy awakes from a decade-long slumber.

Japan passed some key milestones in 2005 as Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi gambled his leadership and won a mandate to press ahead with economic reform, including the privatization of the postal system and its massive savings bank.

The Tokyo stock market jumped about 40 percent to levels not seen for over five years as investors bet that following a series of false dawns, this time the economic recovery in Japan is for real.

In the clearest sign yet that Japan is breaking out of its long deflationary spiral, consumer prices showed the first year-on-year rise in November for over two years, gaining 0.1 percent, the government said Tuesday.

"Japan is emerging into a reliable Pacific powerhouse," Merrill Lynch economist Jesper Koll wrote in a research note, forecasting economic growth here of 3.0 percent in 2006, up from 2.5 percent in 2005.

"After years of stagnation marked by relatively short-lived growth spurts, we think Japan's macro- and micro-economy is finally ready to fulfill its longer-term high growth potential," he added.

However, the government and the Bank of Japan are both taking a somewhat cautious view of prospects for growth.

The Bank of Japan forecast gross domestic product growth will slow to 1.8 percent in the fiscal year to March 2007 from 2.2 percent the previous term.

The government for its part expects the economy to grow only 1.9 percent in fiscal 2006, below the 2.7 percent projected for the current year.

The Bank of Japan and the government expect consumer prices will rise 0.5 percent in the year to March 2007, marking the first increase in eight years.

Falling prices have beset the world's second largest economy for almost all of the past eight years, cutting into company profits and encouraging consumers to put off purchases in the hope of getting a better bargain in the future.

Analysts believe that a return to modest inflation will set the scene for the Bank of Japan to end its super-expansionary policy some time next year and return to a more normal policy of targeting interest rates.

"Japan will say sayonara to deflation in 2006 but the goodbye will be prolonged," predicted Robert Feldman, chief economist for Japan at Morgan Stanley.

"Fortunately, the delays in saying goodbye to deflation will only give the economy more ability to solidify structural gains. With strong productivity growth continuing, both profits and wages can rise, while prices stay subdued and real growth becomes more self-sustaining," he wrote in a note to clients.

The Bank of Japan has been flooding the banking system with cash since March 2001 in an effort to stem falls in consumer prices and stimulate growth in addition to keeping interest rates effectively at zero percent.

The central bank has signaled that an end to this "quantitative easing" policy is likely sometime after the end of the fiscal year in March.

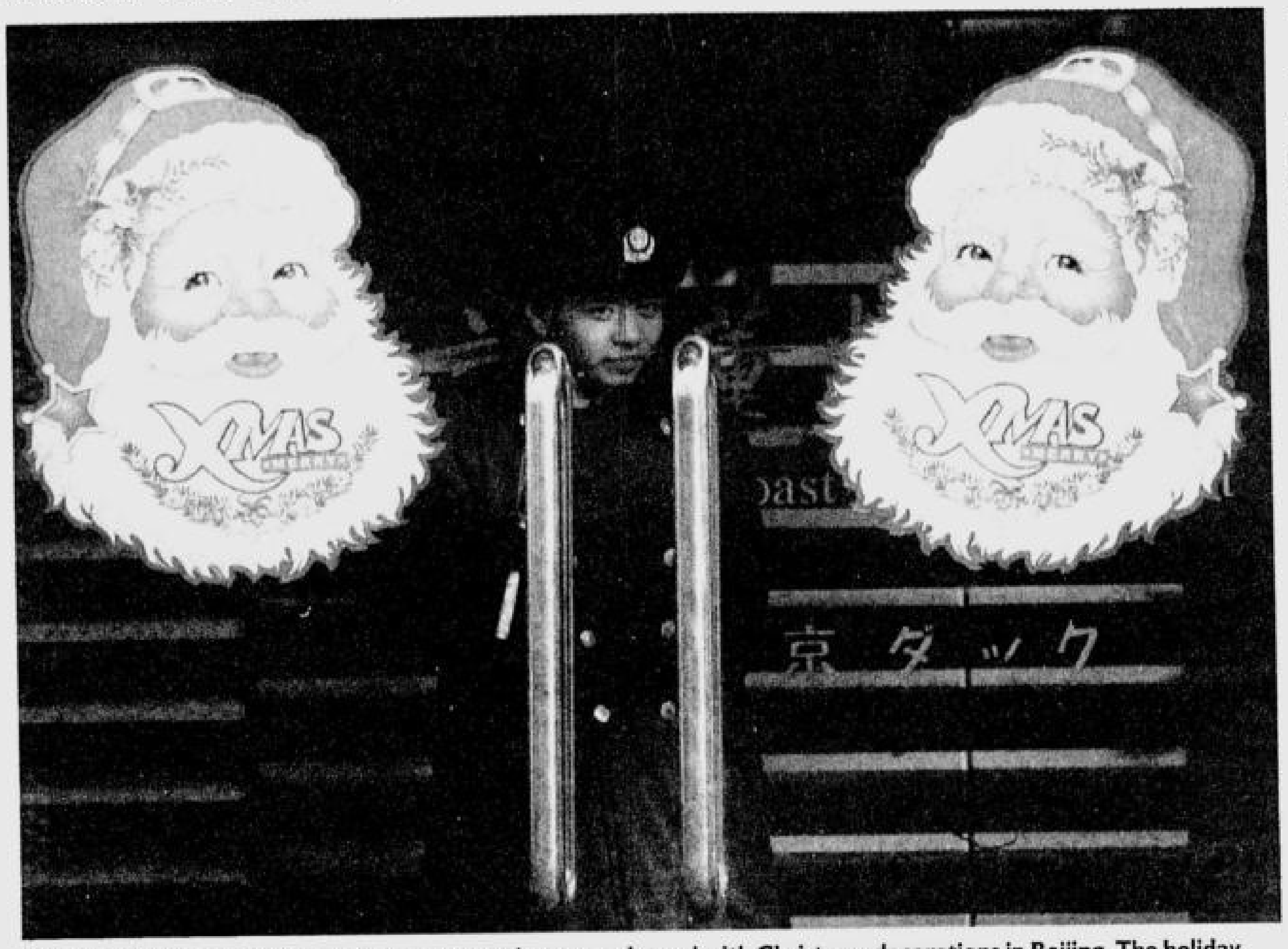
However, the central bank is expected to maintain interest rates at low levels into 2007 and is also under pressure by Koizumi's government not to rush to end its quantitative easing policy for fear of a return to deflation.

Significantly, Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe told reporters following news of the rise in consumer prices: "We are not in a situation yet that allows us to change the view that mild deflation is continuing."

"In our view, Japan's policymakers are in no rush to tighten," said Koll at Merrill Lynch.

One cloud lurking on the horizon is the possibility of a rise in the consumption tax as part of plans to strengthen government finances but Koizumi has ruled out a hike anytime soon.

With Koizumi planning an exit in 2006, the outlook for further structural reform is also murky. *AFP*



A SECURITY guard peers out of a restaurant doorway adorned with Christmas decorations in Beijing. The holiday season celebrating the birth of Christ has become increasingly popular in China, not for religious reasons under the communist regime in the world's fourth largest economy, but commercial, as elsewhere across the world. AFP

Nikkei ends at 5-year high

TOKYO—JAPAN'S NIKKEI SHARE AVERAGE rose 1.4 percent on Wednesday to end at a new five-year closing high as builders including Kajima Corp. and property shares gained after data underscored the economy's strength.

A rise in the dollar helped Sony Corp., Toyota Motor Corp. and other exporters, while Hitachi Ltd. and Toshiba Corp. advanced on news of talks to jointly produce next-generation system chips with Renesas Technology Corp.

Analysts said industrial production data for November, which although slightly weaker than expected was the fourth month of growth, and strong housing data released on Tuesday underlined brisk spending in the private sector.

Fujio Ando, Chibagin Asset Management's senior managing director, said personal spending was strong, citing upward earnings forecast revisions by department store Takashimaya Co. Ltd.

"People are buying coats because of the cold weather and luxury goods are selling well," he said.

The Nikkei rose 225.21 points to 16,194.61, its highest since September 2000. The broader TOPIX index climbed 0.98 percent to 1,653.92.

Data released Tuesday showed housing starts in Japan rose 12.6 percent in November, helping builders.

Among major general contractors, Kajima Corp. jumped 4 percent to 684 yen and Obayashi Corp. rose 3 percent to 866 yen.

Likewise, property stocks gained, with top property developer Mitsui Fudosan Co. Ltd. rising 1.9 percent to 2,375 yen and No.2 Mitsubishi Estate Co. Ltd. up 2.3 percent at 2,420 yen.

In the technology sector, Hitachi gained 0.3 percent to 792 yen and Toshiba rose 1.2 percent to 695 yen after the two firms and Renesas Technology Corp. said on Wednesday they are in talks to jointly produce next-generation system chips.

Auto stocks rose as the dollar held on to sharp gains against the yen, fetching at 117.35 yen. Industry leader Toyota Motor Corp. rose 1 percent to 5,990 yen while second-ranked Nissan Motor Co. Ltd. edged up 0.9 percent to 1,194 yen.

Some retail stocks gained, with Takashimaya, Japan's biggest department store operator, up 2.6 percent at 1,845 yen after raising its full-year profit estimate by 15 percent.

But Seven & I Holdings fell 2.2 percent to 4,920 yen after hitting a lifetime high of 5,300 yen on Tuesday. It gained 14 percent during the previous two sessions after announcing plans to buy a domestic department store group.

Meanwhile, shares in Internet and communications conglomerate Softbank Corp. ended up 3.2 percent percent at 4,380 yen after surging as high as 4,680 yen in earlier trade.

Shares in the company underwent a 3-for-1 split on Wednesday, and under a new rule introduced this week investors are allowed to sell shares on the day of the split.

Trade volume fell to its lowest level since Aug. 31, with 1.65 billion shares changing hands on the exchange's first section. Advancers outnumbered decliners 1,212 to 352. *Reuters*

Bright Christmas season for European retailers

BERLIN—RETAILERS ACROSS EUROPE painted a mostly bright picture of turnover in the run up to Christmas, the year's most important shopping period.

In Germany, retailers were upbeat that Christmas sales in Europe's largest economy could match year-ago levels and expressed hope more customers could pour into shops spending gift vouchers and presents of cash in the last days of 2005.

A French retail association even raised its full year forecast after a bumper yuletide season, but there where no chimes in Italy.

German department store operator KarstadtQuelle, said sales in the last two months of 2005 outstripped those of the same period of 2004. "Business was good," a spokesman for KarstadtQuelle said. "We are ahead of plan."

In France, Jacques Perrilliat, chairman of the Union de Commerce de Centre-Ville (UCV) representing department stores like Galeries Lafayette, Printemps, Virgin and its French rival Fnac, raised his full year forecast in the wake of the Christmas performance.

"Sales on Dec. 24 were very good and we should finish the year with 3.5 percent growth over the year," daily Les Echos quoted Perrilliat on Tuesday as saying, a week after he had predicted growth of 2-3 percent.

But Italian retailers' association Confesercenti said Christmas had been lackluster apart from grocery sales, as food-loving Italy spent more on Christmas dinner than last year.

"In the clothing sector, it has been a weak Christmas ahead of the sales," said Confesercenti Chairman Marco Venturi in a statement published on the association's website.

In Britain, Boxing Day served up a bonanza for Britain's retailers, as figures from two independent research firms showed that shopper numbers were up by almost a fifth on last year.

Bargain-hunting Britons queued outside department stores, fashion chains and electricals outlets on Monday to take advantage of the traditional deep price-cutting that most top retailers managed to hold over until after Christmas Day.

And as the country's stock-market-listed shopping chains prepare to release trading statements for the make-or-break holiday season, the UK's sixth largest food seller Waitrose reported a strong upturn in pre-Christmas sales, especially of organic turkeys, mince pies and Christmas puddings.

German retail association BAG said the Christmas sales season, estimated by experts to reap a fifth of annual turnover, had come as a nice surprise for its members, who include Karstadt.

SHOPPERS pass sales posters in London's Oxford Street. Retailers reported brisk business in retail outlets all over Britain. AP

"We expect sales in the Advent weeks (starting Nov. 26) to slightly outstrip the previous years' levels," BAG Chief Executive Rolf Pangels told daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung.

Others are more cautious, warning that overall Christmas sales numbers could still change depending on how many people go shopping in the last days of 2005.

The industry still expects full year sales to fall around 1 percent in nominal terms.

"Everything depends on this week and whether people will come to the shops in droves to spend the money they have been given as presents," said Hubertus Pellengahr, spokesman for the HDE retail group which will merge with BAG in January.

German Christmas sales have been falling steadily since 2001. In 2004, turnover totalled 68.1 billion euros ($80.8 billion) in November and December.

Sluggish private consumption, which accounts for some 60 percent of gross domestic product, has been a drag on growth for Europe's largest economy, which has had to rely heavily on exports. *AP*

Open for the holidays.

These branches will be open on the following dates from 9:00am to 12:00nn.

Open December 30

Alabang
Bacolod - Lacson
Baguio
Batangas - P. Burgos
Cagayan de Oro - Lapasan
Caloocan - Mabini
Cebu - Main
Cubao
Dagupan
Davao - Sta. Ana
Diliman
Ermita
Iloilo - Iznart
La Union
NAIA (open 10am - 6pm)
Pasig - Renaissance
Rockwell (open 10am - 4pm)
Roxas Blvd.
San Pedro
Sta. Ana
T. Alonzo
Tutuban (open 10am - 4pm)
West Avenue
Zamboanga - Veterans

Open December 31

Angeles
Balibago
Baliuag
Iba, Zambales
Legaspi - Bicol
Malolos
Naga
NAIA (open 10am - 6pm)
San Fernando
Sta. Cruz, Zambales
Tarlac

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Editor Aries Espinosa

1st Feng Shui extravaganza in the country slated in January

THE YEAR 2006 MAY BE THE MOST exciting year for us Filipinos as we await the arrival of one of the world's leading exponents of feng shui, Lillian Too.

Too is coming to the Philippines for the very first time to reveal what the year of the Fire Dog has in store for everyone.

World of Feng Shui Philippines (WOFS), through its president and CEO Marites Allen, is proud to announce that this January, Too will be coming over to the country to hold the very first Feng Shui extravaganza. Too intends to share her knowledge and guide everyone through 2006 with her seminar slated early next year in Manila. Entitled "How to Increase Luck and Good Fortune in the Fire Dog Year 2006," Too's talk will help you prepare for the upcoming year.

Too is also the founder and chair of WOFS.com and WOFS boutiques - a feng shui merchandising and franchise company present in Malaysia, Spain, Brunei, India, Hawaii, Japan, Indonesia, Netherlands, Australia, Thailand, New Zealand, United Kingdom, USA, Mexico and the Philippines. She also founded and heads the Lillian Too Certified Consultants Institute, which runs correspondence courses and certification programs in feng shui.

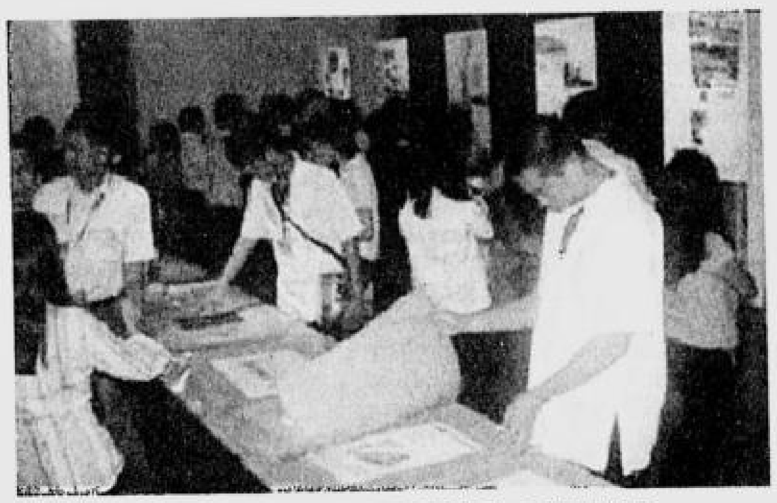
Too, an MBA graduate from the Harvard Business School in the USA, was the first woman in Malaysia to head a public listed company. In 1982, she became the first woman in Asia to be appointed CEO of a Bank.

She was at the top of her career when she decided to quit and pursue her passion for writing and to become a full-time mother. She imparts, "But I want to tell you, when you make a decision to quit when you are at the top, when you have so much power and everything is done for you and everyone wants to be your friend, you become nothing overnight. Believe me, it was tough."

She has authored over 80 best selling books on the subject, which have been translated into 30 languages. Her books sell millions of copies around the world, in the process popularizing feng shui worldwide. She has given feng shui consultations to many famous people - business magnates, celebrities, and the like. She further noted that she has also done consultations in Hollywood. She disclosed, "One was an Oscar winner. The year she was up for an Oscar, she called me. Then she won a major Oscar award. Another one is a well-known actor who is a Buddhist."

Too reveals, "I say to them, "It works for me and I hope it works for you." I am very proud that we have succeeded. I don't sell feng shui as magic. I don't sell it as anything spiritual."

For more information on the Feng Shui Extravaganza 2006, please call WOFS Philippines at 914-7888/916-0000. You may also send your inquiries to 3918 for Smart subscribers or register now at your nearest Rustans, Ticketnet and Ticketworld outlets.



UST EXHIBIT IN BEATO ANGELICO GALLERY

The Beato Angelico Gallery, named after a Dominican painter of the Italian Renaissance, has been home to works of both promising talents and established masters of the College of Architecture and Fine Arts at the University of Santo Tomas. In June this year, professor Mary Ann Venturina-Bunaladi accepted the custodianship of the gallery for the school year and set its facilities for further service. Since professor Bunaladi's appointment, several distinguished UST alumni paid their visit and displayed their creative works at the Beato Angelico main gallery. From college classrooms to the corporate office, Ponch Oñate and Jules Perez held their exhibit titled Keeping it Fresh, a display of some of their most recent successful works-a gesture of gratitude to the university which honed their craft. This is to impart to the university students how their alumni developed what they learned 25 years past.

ARDS
CLASS
ELLENC

METROCAN SIGNS 5-YEAR CBA IN ADVANCE

Tincan and plastic packaging manufacturer, Metro Container Corp recently inked its 5 year CBA package, a year in advance as a sign of continuous industrial peace. Shown (from right) are: Alfredo C. Austria (personnel manager), Victor T. Ley (president), Ernie D. Naa (union president) and Willy G. Dolot (union secretary).

The answer to rodent problems

TO PREVENT LOSSES IN AGRIculture and industrial businesses, world agri-business leader Syngenta unveiled the newest addition to its portfolio called Klerat, a UK-manufactured rodenticide that is specially designed for tropical countries like the Philippines.

"This new rodenticide is our answer to the growing number of harmful rodents in the Philippines particularly in business establishments and agricultural farms. This product is especially designed for safe and easy use. Klerat is in solid wax block form that thrives in damp places making it non-susceptible to moisture and instead increases the probability of hitting its target—to kill rats," said Hector Lojo, Syngenta-Philippines vice president for corporate sales and professional products, at the formal launch at the Manila Intercontinental Hotel in Makati City.

Lojo added that with the new rodenticide, "consumers will definitely have a better alternative in suppressing the multiplication of rodents and its harmful effects as this will also add value to the pest control industry in the Philippines.

"To prevent misuse and misapplication, Syngenta will first make this product available to pest control operators who will be taught on how to best utilize the product to maximize its effectiveness while ensuring safety," said Lojo.

Dr. Allan Buckle, a Syngenta consultant from the United Kingdom who has more than 20 years experience in public health and pest control programs, substantiated the presentations with his impressive knowledge in crop protection and rodent management. He explained that Klerat, a rodenticide which has been developed and backed up by comprehensive research, is made of wax blocks resistant to moisture and extreme temperature. It kills rats without endangering non-targets like humans. He provided a comprehensive presentation on how rats behave and where they dwell to better familiarize food company participants on the useful techniques in preventing and maintaining a rodent-free clean food production area.

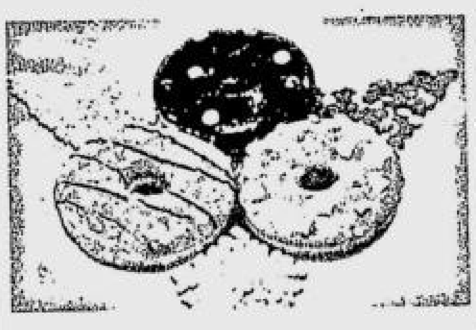
Klerat comes with a Multiplex Bait Station, an all-purpose insect and rodent control station which is tamper resistant and keeps bait from non-targets. Syngenta recommends the use of this bait station to prevent house pets from the danger of consuming the rat killer and to keep the rodenticide away from the production area that might cause food contamination.

Murray Hern, Syngenta's business manager for the Asia Pacific region, said the introduction of this state-of-the-art bait station will guarantee outstanding performance and ensure maximum safety during its use.

ProductFILES

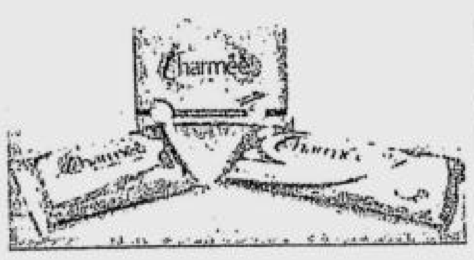
Ring in the New Year with Hot Loops Ring Galore

ADD MORE FUN TO YOUR TRADITION AS you ring in the coming year with sweeter good luck treats: Hot Loops Donuts' Ring Galore. Circular objects and rings like grapes, oranges, pomelos and Hot Loops donuts are said to represent health and long life, since its roundness resembles infinity. With Hot Loops Ring Galore's delicious and loopy nature, it's a sure way to attract sweet vibes and delectable excitement for the coming year. Ring Galore donuts come in three variants: Choc-Ful O'Nips, Berry Manilow, and Crunchy Choc-O-Nut. You can now catch Hot Loops in their dine-in branches at Cherry Foodarama along Congressional Ave., Robinsons Pioneer, Robinsons Galleria, Valley Fair Town Center in Taytay Rizal and Crossing Department Store along Quezon Blvd, also available in all Ministop outlets and in selected Robinsons Supermarkets around the metro.



Charmee protects you for the coming year

NOW EVERY WOMAN CAN CELEBRATE THE coming new year with joy because Charmee will keep her worries at bay. Charmee provides utmost protection while giving comfort and freshness with its feminine protection line. Charmee feminine pads are the answer for all types of needs with its anti-leak control channels. For everyday protection, Charmee also offers Regular Unscented Pantyliners for all-day freshness and Charmee Feminine Wipes make women feel more refreshed anytime of the day. With a whole range of quality-guaranteed products, Charmee is available at all leading supermarkets, groceries, and drugstores nationwide.



Whirlpool's new breed of washing machine

TRUE TO ITS COMmitment in providing quality products and exceeding customer expectations, Whirlpool is offering one of the most technologically advanced washing machines in the market today. The WWI206, a top load fully automatic washing machine with groundbreaking technology is equipped with special features. It boasts of the Aqua Shower Waterfall Technology which showers filtered, lint-free water directly onto the clothes to increase the cleaning power. It also has a stainless steel wash tub which no other brand in the same category has, giving it the edge among its competitors. With WWI206, Whirlpool has once again proven that they are the undisputed leader in this ever-changing global market and is committed in delivering quality products and services to customers at the best possible value.

SMART, PILTEL BILLS PAYMENT AT 7-ELEVEN BRANCHES

Smart Communication Inc (Smart) and Pilipino Telephone Corp (Piltel) partnered with Electronic Commerce Payment Networks Inc (Ecpay) to make bill payments more convenient for its users. Subscribers of Smart Gold, Addict Mobile, Smart Infinity, Smart WiFi as well as landline users of Piltel may now enjoy the added convenience of paying their bills at 7-Eleven outlets in Greater Manila Areas. Photo shows (seated, from left) Jose Maria Bondoc, Smart head for credit and collections; Ramoncito Fernandez, Piltel director; Raymund Jude Aguilar, Ecpay president and Jason Briones, Ecpay general manager during the contract signing.

CASHandog ng Insular Life, I-Text Mo, Info Mo

POLICYHOLDERS OF INSULAR LIFE WITH in-force policies can text their latest valid contact information to Insular Life and get the chance to win as much as P95,000 in 2 raffle draws on December 2005 and February 2006. To join, text: INSULARLIFE Policy Number/Last Name/Birth Date/Home Phone. Send to 2327 for Globe subscribers and 0917-8902327 for non-Globe subscribers (P1.00 per text)

Note: Birth Date is in mmddyy format. Example: Feb. 18, 1959, should be sent as 021859

Home Phone with area code for non-MM numbers. Example: If Iligan area code of 063 Home Phone, should be sent as 063-8669910

Example of complete text message entry: INSULARLIFE A009999991/Flores/021859/063-8669910

Raffle Mechanics:

1. An entry will be considered valid only if it follows the prescribed text message format specified above.

2. Only one (1) raffle entry will be considered for one (1) valid policy number. For policy number with multiple messages, only the last valid message sent will be considered.

3. Winners will be determined by electronic raffle draw. Only in-force policies at the time of draw will be declared valid winners.

4. There will be two (2) raffle draws : December 2005 and February 2006.

- Non-winning raffle entries in the December 2005 draw will be included in the February 2006 draw.

5. If a policyholder wins more than once, he/she gets the prize with the higher value.

Names of winners will be published in major newspapers. Winners will be notified through registered mail. Prizes must be claimed within 60 days from the date of notice. For further inquiries, visit any Insular Life branch nationwide, call Insular Life Call Center at 771-1818 locals 4424/4438 or log on to: www.insularlife.com.ph.

Convergys wins gold and silver in 2005 Brandon Hall Excellence in Learning Awards

CONVERGYS CORP, A GLOBAL LEADER IN providing customer care, human resources, and billing services, has announced that its Employee Care Learning Solutions offering received both gold and silver awards in the 2005 Brandon Hall Excellence in Learning Awards. Convergys was recognized during an awards ceremony and reception held in Long Beach, California, as part of the 2005 Training Fall Conference & Expo.

Both awards recognized Convergys' learning solutions work in the Custom Content Category, Special Strength: Simulation. The Gold Award honors the development of the Microsoft Go-to-Market Sales Simulation for the Account Manager, and the development of the Mazda Selling Skills Simulation, which won the Silver Award.

"Convergys is delighted to receive this recognition from Brandon Hall, and these awards reflect the hard work and outstanding capabilities of our team to achieve superior business results for our clients," said Marianne Langlois, vice president of Learning Solutions in Convergys' Employee Care business. "Savvy organizations that understand their competitive edge comes from their workforce are continually seeking ways to deliver sophisticated employee training and learning solutions. These awards further validate the ability of Convergys to deliver results that meet the growing, complex training needs of organizations across all industries."

The Brandon Hall Excellence in Learning Awards are presented by Brandon Hall Research, one of the leading research and consulting firms in training and development. Now in its eleventh year, the Awards program showcases exceptional work in innovative learning.

"The winning entries this year show a great combination of creativity and practical results. The winners are excellent both in terms of innovation and impact on the business," said Brandon Hall, Ph.D., chairman of the Excellence in Learning Awards program. "These winners show us what the future of learning looks like."

Convergys is one of the first human resources administration and management companies to offer learning business process outsourcing (LBPO) services and has more than 450 learning customers. Convergys provides services ranging from comprehensive outsourcing of the entire learning function, to selective outsourcing of administrative tasks and processes, to out-tasking discrete e-learning initiatives.

Learning solutions from Convergys help companies achieve breakthrough improvements in business performance by reinventing their approach to training and improving the cost, quality, and effectiveness of learning. Convergys is Outthinking, Outdoing(TM) on behalf of its clients every day.

Bits & Clips

Celebrate the New Year with the original Dragon

MOST OF THE FIREWORKS IN THE MARKET nowadays are feared defective or less efficient especially if the product is not carrying any label or patent. Worse, one may even become unluckier if the fireworks turn out illegal. Dragon Fireworks and the authorities are in the latter's campaign against the manufacture and selling of illegal fireworks. Some of these products are imitations thus belonging to a lower class category. These fireworks are sold everywhere that buyers are unaware of the risk that they may face if they use illegally manufactured fireworks. Dragon Fireworks Inc has been continuously producing world-class quality fireworks in the Philippines since 1992. For consumers, Dragon Fireworks has an impressive line that caters to all kinds of budgets. "Our loyal patrons who have made us the most preferred brand of fireworks since 1992, realize that you can never replace or try to save on quality and safety. This is why even with the availability of cheap imitations, they still prefer to buy the original Dragon Fireworks," says Jovenson Ong, manager of Dragon Fireworks Inc. DF has been used in grand shows like the 23rd Southeast Asian Games, the Film Academy of the Philippines Awards Night, SM Supermall shows, GMA7, Smart Golf Classic, and in Cebu, the 19th Philippine Ad Congress and Ayala Mall shows.

MHPHS reunion

THE MARCELO H. DEL PIlar High School (MHPHS) class 1960 of Malolos City will hold its alumni homecoming on Jan. 8, 2006 from 9 a.m. at the Villa Reina Resort, Catmon, Malolos City. All graduates are requested to join and celebrate. For further inquiries, call Cris Candelaria at (63)917-7518108; Joyce Estrada at 0918-7359562; Cely Ongleo at 791-3383 and Lany Alonzo 791-7850.

GMA 7-Fujifilm calendar

STARGAZING WILL BE THE COOLEST TREND IN 2006, and Fujifilm does not mean looking up in the sky at night to marvel at dazzling constellations – the stars are all in an exclusive Fujifilm pocket calendar featuring the brightest and hottest talents from GMA 7, the country's top rating television station. For every roll of film (any brand) developed and or minimum of 20 prints ordered at any Fujifilm/YKL photoshop nationwide, a costumer gets a GMA 7 – Fujifilm pocket calendar for free. This limited edition of twelve design calendars will be available only January of 2006. Visit all Fujifilm/YKL photo shop and Digital Imaging Stations nationwide and grab your copy of this one-of-a-kind offer. Promo ends until supply last.

BUSINESS

Bangko Sentral: December inflation may ease to 6.7-7.1%

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS projected that inflation for December would range between 6.7 and 7.1 percent, possibly lower than the growth of prices recorded in the previous months.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. told reporters that the BSP, in determining inflation in December, took into consideration the easing of oil prices in the world market and the growth of domestic liquidity.

Inflation in November hit 7.1 percent, while that for the January-to-November period averaged 7.7 percent, the National Statistics Office reported earlier.

The easing of inflation in December came about despite the implementation of the VAT Reform Law on Nov. 1. The law expanded the coverage of the tax to include oil and electricity, among others.

The BSP's inflation forecast for December coincided with that of the National Economic and Development Authority, which earlier said that the slight decline in oil prices toward the end of the year would have a softening impact on inflation.

The government earlier had conceded that the official 2005 inflation target of 5 to 6 percent was no longer attainable, due to the unexpected increase in oil prices. *Michelle V. Remo*

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PHP 950 PER PERSON
Includes party favors and choice of bottomless iced tea or glass of sparkling wine

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For inquiries and reservations, call 638-7777 extension 3401/3408.

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Imports dipped 3.1% in October

Slowdown due to high oil prices, effects of expanded VAT coverage

By Michelle V. Remo

THE COUNTRY'S IMPORTS DROPPED 3.1 percent in October compared with the year-ago level, indicating a slowdown in consumption during the succeeding months, the National Statistics Office yesterday reported.

NSO data showed that imports reached only $7.517 billion last October compared with the $7.761 billion recorded during the same month in 2004.

The October imports brought the cumulative imports figure to $37.227 billion, registering an almost flat growth of 0.3 percent, from the $37.117 billion recorded during the same period last year.

The latest import figure likewise brought the country's balance of trade (BOT) in October to a deficit of $248 million for the month, and a deficit of $3.559 billion for the first 10 months of the year. The deficit for the 10 months was lower than the $4.399 billion posted during the same period last year.

The year-on-year decline in imports in October reflected the expected slowdown this year of growth in holiday spending.

Retailers said that while there had been an increase in consumption toward the end of the year, the growth was smaller compared to the year-ago level. Economists attributed the slowdown to high oil prices and the effects of the expanded coverage of the value-added tax.

Victor Abola, economics professor from the University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P), said in an interview that the minimal growth in imports as of the first 10 months of the year already made it impossible for the country to achieve the expected 10-percent imports growth this year to support the 8- to 10-percent exports growth target.

Electronics that are assembled in the Philippines in raw form accounted for 48.6 percent of the country's total import bill in October. Finished products form the bulk of the country's exports.

Abola noted that the 0.3-percent growth in imports for the January-to-October period had swelled due to the sharp increase in the prices of oil. He said that, excluding oil, merchandise imports posted an estimated decline of 8 percent.

"The targets (imports and exports) will no longer be reached given the soft external demand and the relocation of some export facilities out of the country," Abola said. "But the country is expected to recover in 2006."

The NSO reported that electronics accounted for the biggest share—$1.886 billion—of the imports bill for October.

Mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials followed, accounting for $389.9 million of the imports bill. The third top import for October was transport equipment, accounting for $194.56 million.

Other top imports were: industrial machinery and equipment, $160.97 million; iron and steel, $105.86 million; textile, yarn, fabrics and related materials, $101.04 million; plastics, $79.81 million; chemicals, $77.62 million; telecommunications equipment, $75.39 million; and cereals and cereal preparations, $49.27 million.

Top sources of imports were: United States, accounting for $699.8 million of total import bill; Japan, $596.31 million; Singapore, $351.5 million; Taiwan, $309.1 million; China, $270.41 million; Korea, $231 million; Malaysia, $181.61 million; Hong Kong, $180.65 million; Thailand, $149.22 million; and Germany, $127.76 million.

In Mindanao, strife-torn towns get taste of power

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND WINrock International recently signed a P21-million agreement to energize 21 barangay units in conflict-stricken areas in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao.

According to the agreement, funding for the project will come from the DOE's Barangay Electrification Program.

The DOE will also be the one to identify and choose the 21 communities that will be energized.

The agreement is under the Alliance for Mindanao and Multi-Regional Off-grid Renewable Energy (Amore) program.

Winrock will be in charge of the procurement and installation of the appropriate renewable energy systems for the communities. The selection of contractors for the project will be done through a bidding process.

Winrock will also encourage the participation of the communities' residents to ensure the sustained management and operation of the energy systems.

Also under the agreement, Winrock and the DOE will finalize the implementation strategies covering the partnership.

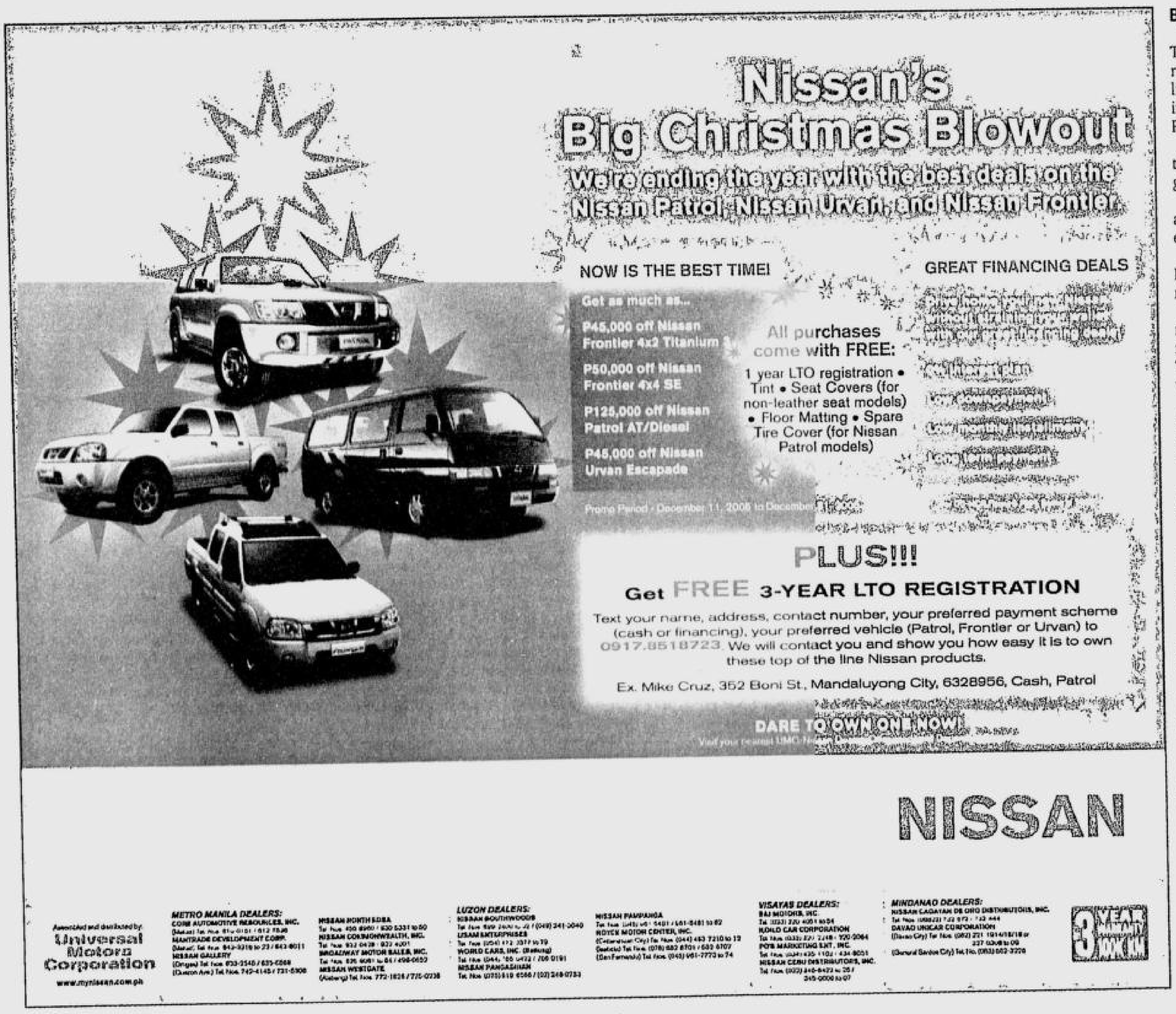
The 21 communities that the DOE and Winrock had set out to help were in addition to the more than 200 communities that would be energized through the Amore program from 2006 to 2008.

The installation of renewable energy systems in the communities is expected to be completed in 2006.

"The signing of the agreement demonstrates our strong commitment to help bring peace and development in conflict-stricken Mindanao," Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said.

The Amore program is a joint project of the government—through the DOE and ARMM—and the United States Agency for International Development. Also involved are private sector partners Mirant Foundation and Davao Light and Power Co. Inc. and the state-run National Power Corp.

Since its creation in April 2002, the Amore program has energized 227 off-grid areas in the ARMM using photovoltaic and micro-hydro power systems. Lotilla said that about 3,000 communities in the country still have no access to electricity.



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SIPPING *bignay* wine at the Malagos Garden Resort in Davao with our hosts, Olive and Charita Puentespina

Lessons on local wines

COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Fenix

Welcome the New Year with native spirits like 'basi,' 'lambanog,' 'tuba' and 'bignay'

WHEN YOU CHEER THE New Year, why not raise a glass of local wine?

I'm not talking here of bulk wines brought in from other countries and then bottled here. We do have wines from sugar cane, coconut and local fruits.

The first local wines I tasted were brought home by my father from his many travels through the country. They had names that were unfamiliar then, like *basi* and *bignay*. There were fruits I knew, like *duhat* (Java plum), but I couldn't believe they could be converted into alcoholic drinks.

The brand name was "Damo" and those bottles would gather dust because my siblings and I were more interested in stealing a drink from our parents' Martini & Rossi vermouth. When that ran out, we finally tried the contents of those dusty Damo bottles and were turned off by how tart and sour the wines tasted.

Sweet 'basi'

It was many years after when I encountered *basi* again. On a food trip to the north, we stopped at Naguilian, La Union, to see how the wine was made. The main worker was a carabao going around in circles turning a lever that extracted juice from sugar cane. A few feet away a vat was boiling. The man watching over the carabao told our group that the cooking produced the *basi*.

He told us there were two kinds of *basi*—*babae* and *lalake*. He explained by saying simply, "*Ang babae, matamis.*"

We laughed at the gender distinction—male for the drier *basi* and female for the sweeter kind. So we bought our share of both that months later became vinegar due to neglect. But the *basi* wasn't wasted because it made the finest vinaigrette for salad.

I did get to taste a 5-year-old *basi* straight from the reserve in a *burnay* (clay jar) in Vigan, Ilocos Sur. It was surprisingly smooth and proved equal to the finest French or Australian wines I'd tasted. I almost cried when a *damajuana* (demijohn) of the best *basi* had to be watered down for a photograph of Ilocano food and beverage. Too dark, according to the art director.

The *burnay*, with the *basi*, is usually buried under the house. That's the Filipino way of aging—dig a hole rather than find a cave to store the wine. An Ilocano friend said his father plotted on a map the location of each jar, which was dug up five years later.

'Tuba' mixer

My introduction to *tuba* was at a drinking session among my husband and his friends on my first visit to Leyte. The first thing I found out about *tuba* was that it evaporated through the sweat glands, giving the drinker a rancid smell, so it took a long time before I tried it. I started with the sweetish new *tuba*, then graduated to what connoisseurs called *bahalina*.

Edilberto N. Alegre, in his book "Inumang Pinoy" (Anvil Publishing, 1992), wrote how, in La Paz, Leyte, there were specific names for how long *tuba* was aged—"stainless" (young and sweet), *bahal* (aged days to a few weeks) and the final *bahalina* (several months to years).

Tuba is tart but Pepsi Cola is supposed to sweeten the drink a bit which is why, in *tuba*-producing regions, that softdrink has outsold the competition.

Lethal 'lambanog'

In Bulacan, *tuba* is also the name for the drink from the nipa palm (*sasa*). In Quezon, the same drink is called *lambanog*, which is also the province's name for the drink made from coconut sap.

Among local spirits, it's *lambanog* that has a reputation for being a lethal concoction. Drinking friends have their own fantastic stories about this local vodka. One said a passing mosquito died when he burped. Another one said when some *lambanog* was spilled, smoke rose from the floor. And then there was that story that the best *lambanog* had a *butiki* marinating in it.

For students on allowance and young workers on subsistence wages, *lambanog* is infinitely cheaper than Absolut. My brother said he and his college friends ordered from Lucban and made sure it had raisins to add flavor to the colorless, odorless drink.

In recent years, the *lambanog* acquired new colors and flavors such as blue bubble gum and red strawberry. It's like drinking a deadly juice.

'Bignay' leads

Among fruit wines, it is *bignay* that would resurface now and then in food shows. After that unfortunate first taste of my father's bottle of *bignay*, it took years before I took my next sip. It was at lunch at the Malagos Garden Resort in Davao. Our hosts, Charita and Olive Puentespina, poured a deep dark red liquid into wine glasses. I thought it could pass for any imported table grape wine.

Olive said there were so many fruits from several trees around the resort, they just had to do something with the *bignay*.

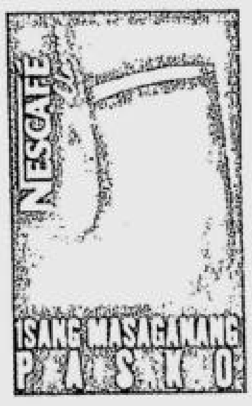
Patubas Corp., on the other hand, has made *bignay* wine a business endeavor. The wine is aged for about six months in glass vats. The bottles and the labels are professionally done. Today, there are two plants producing the company's products of both juice and wine —Las Piñas City, Metro Manila, and Los Baños, Laguna.

The *patubas* (Ilonggo for harvest) *bignay* is sweet, which if it were *basi* would be the female version. Its alcohol content seems higher than the 12 percent the label says so it needs to be aired a bit before drinking.

If *bignay* isn't your thing, the company also does *duhat*, mango, pineapple and *guyabano* (soursop). Retail price is P200 per bottle.

These are the local alternatives to the imported wines now flooding the market. Raise a glass then to the New Year.

E-mail the author at pinoyfood04@yahoo.com



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What could be more Pinoy?

"MAMA Chit" Ongpauco, founder of Barrio Fiesta

OVER THE YEARS, BARRIO FIESTA HAS become a place where Filipino friends and families gather together and enjoy good Filipino dishes.

The logo of a *palayok* (terra-cotta pot) and the letters in bamboo design forming the letters "B" (for "Barrio") and "F" (for "Fiesta") are all too familiar to Filipinos who have made it a tradition to eat there on weekends and special occasions.

The latest Barrio Fiesta, which opened recently on P. Guevara near corner Wilson Street in Greenhills, San Juan, has a new look—bold splashes of colors, paintings of fiesta scenes on the walls, chairs with wrought-iron *heliconias* in bright orange and deep green, papier-maché horse ornaments and lamps reminiscent of Angono's *higantes* by artist Toym Imao.

Owner Corazon Ongpauco-Tamayo thought the restaurant needed to change with the times and so sought the help of her daughter Sheryl, a fine arts graduate who added a much-needed vibrancy to the ambience.

Despite the new look, Barrio Fiesta remains true to its original spirit and commitment of serving good Filipino dishes. In the new branch hangs the portrait of its founder, Sixta Evangelista Ongpauco (1923-1996), fondly called Mama Chit. Her eight children now have a Barrio Fiesta branch each to carry on her legacy.

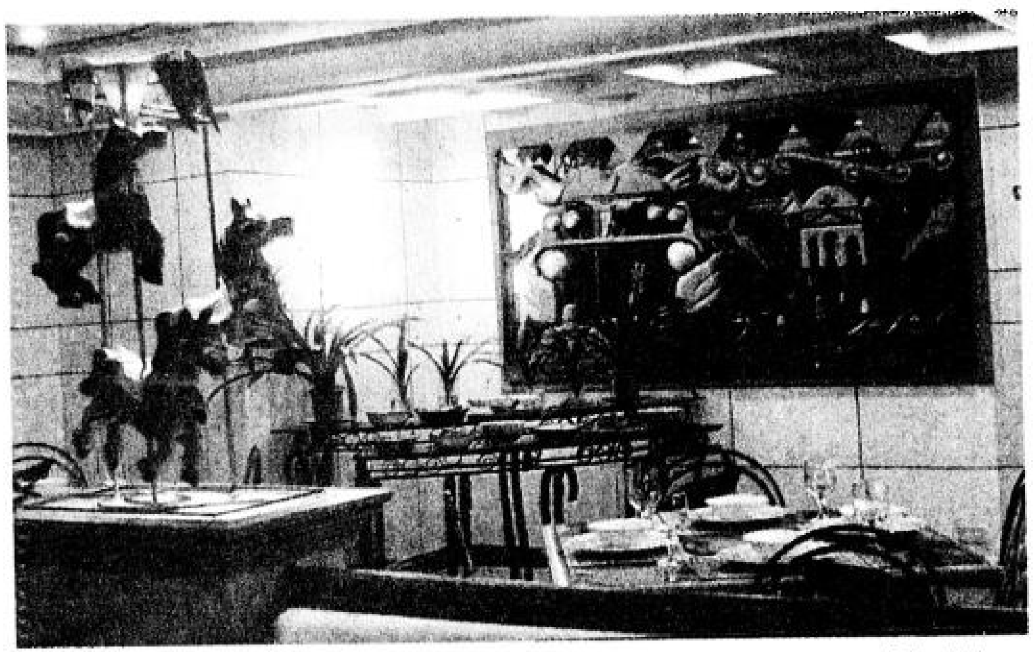
The Ongpaucos had a movie production outfit in the 1950s called Everlasting Pictures which pioneered the action-film genre. Mama Chit started a catering business for the movie outfit. In 1958, she opened the first Barrio Fiesta restaurant in Coloocan along Samson Road (now part of Edsa).

"I think we were the first restaurant to serve authentic Filipino dishes," said Tamayo. Barrio Fiesta served its famous *kare-kare* and *sinigang* in *palayok*, a touch that has been copied by many restaurants over time.

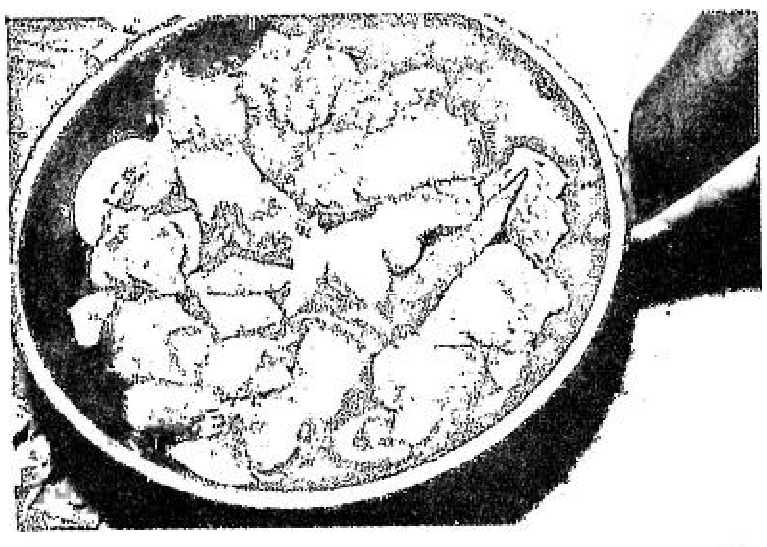
Today's menu still carries Mama Chit's original *kare-kare*, *sinigang* and *adobo* recipes. And, of course, the one dish that made Barrio Fiesta famous— the crispy *pata*, the creation of one of Mama Chit's sons, Rod Ongpauco (the former actor with the screen name Rod Evans).

Barrio Fiesta Greenhills is open from 10 a.m.-11 p.m. Barrio Fiesta branches are in all SM malls and other parts of Metro Manila.

CRISPY Pata, Barrio Fiesta's original



THREE-DIMENSIONAL artwork of sculptor Toym Imao adorns the center part of the dining area.



BINAGOONGANG Baboy

Pipian perfect

By Carla M. Pacis
Finalist, DGF Award 2005

(Editor's note: As has been an INQUIRER *tradition since the first year of the Doreen Gamboa Fernandez food writing awards, we are publishing the finalists.)*

A MEXICAN SAILOR DUE TO LEAVE on the galleon for Manila looked around his mother's kitchen and realized it was her cooking he would miss most, especially her *pipian*, his favorite dish. His eyes fell upon a seeding plant on the window sill. He plucked a handful of seeds and tucked them into a pouch that carried a few silver coins and the gold cross his mother had given to keep him safe on the long sea voyage across the Pacific.

The sailor's voyage did not end in Manila but Vigan, at the *encomienda* of the half-Spanish half-Mexican Juan de Salcedo. In the patio of his small *bahay na bato*, the sailor planted the seeds. Hot summers and rainy days were ideal for their growth, and they sprouted into beautiful plants with tiny, pointed, serrated leaves. From then on, the sailor could enjoy his mothers' excellent *pipian*. He taught his *indio* servant the exact way his mother cooked the dish that so reminded him of home.

This is how I imagine the pasotes plant and *pipian* to have found their way to the Philippines. Pasotes leaf is an essential ingredient in cooking *pipian*, the Mexican dish that has become the Bigueños' very own. In Vigan, a great cook is one who can cook the perfect *pipian*. For this generation, that cook is our very own Rustico Ponce, who learned his trade from his parents who before him were also celebrated cooks.

His father Mando was known to prepare excellent meals for dozens of people on short notice at the height of his reign, especially during campaigns when the Syquias helped Elpidio Quirino in his political career. Mando's wife, Pancing Sebastian, was also a great cook in her own right and, with several of their 13 children, helped him in the kitchen. She acquired cooking skills from her mother, Nana Atang, who in turn learned from her mother, Lola Sebia, whose husband, Lolo Agustin, also happened to be the *cochero* of Don Gregorio Syquia. Their family history is solidly linked to ours.

Flair for cooking

Our cook Rusty, as he is fondly called, and his 12 siblings inherited their forbears' flair for cooking. It is a case where they learned by doing and observing as they grew up in and around the hearth. From an old but clean kitchen, Rusty can whip up the most amazing Ilocano dishes including one that involves the womb of a virgin cow. A cooking session with Rusty will only prove that the best cooks do not measure but rather use their palate, sharp sense of smell, experience, and intuition to know when a meal is properly cooked and ready to serve. It also proves that planning and organization are essential, and that the first order of the day is a trip to the Vigan Public Market to check out what is available.

Everyone at the market knows Rusty. In the guttural language that is Ilocano, they haggle over price and freshness. He will not hesitate to turn down anything not up to measure by his utterance of disapproval and a quick turn of his head to the next stall. For Rusty, freshness is key. So trips to the market twice a day are no problem. Of course, ingredients for *pipian* are first on the list, it being the family's favorite dish.

Like a symphony

To sit in the kitchen and watch Rusty cook is like watching a symphony with him as the conductor. The timing is perfect and the ingredients all blend in. There is a steady stream of conversation while Rusty goes about his business and one is updated on his current health status, family, and town affairs. Before anything else, the ingredients are all neatly arranged on a large plate in little mounds. They include chicken that has been washed, boiled, and chopped into bite-size pieces. Ginger and chicken are sautéed first. When the chicken is slightly brown, it is removed from the pan. Uncooked rice is then toasted till brown but not burned. Then it is pounded and strained till it is fine like flour. *Achuete* (annato) is mixed in with the pounded rice that is then boiled. When the rice comes to a boil, the bubbles are scooped out and the chicken thrown in. As soon as the chicken is tender and cooked, *kamias* (bilimbi), and finally three handfuls of pasotes leaves are added.

In between the steps to make *pipian*, the other minor dishes are attended to. By noon, the table is set and the food spread out including the perfect Vigan venerable: a large bowl of piping hot, freshly cooked chicken *pipian*.

Roast and toast

FOR FILIPINOS, SPECIAL occasions like anniversaries, weddings, birthdays and holiday parties are often graced with *lechon*, and where there is *lechon*, there is Carlo Rossi California Red.

With its fruity notes that perfectly harmonize with *lechon* instead of overpowering the meat's flavor, this medium-bodied wine celebrates all the best in life—good food, good company and good times.

According to Jemelleen Gonzalez of the famous Sosoy's Lechon in Parañaque, "Carlo Rossi is great to pair with *lechon*. *Masarap at nakakapagpagana*. Our customers usually order soft drinks or beer when drinking *lechon*, but now, they are discovering the delicious tandem of red wine and *lechon*."

William Chua of Pingping Lechon explains, "Filipinos are not really wine drinkers but they are adventurous when it comes to food and drinks. *Nung nasubukan nila ipares ang* Carlo Rossi *at lechon, nasarapan sila.*" He added, "This pair is something different, it's new and therefore a must-try."

Carlo Rossi California Red is from E&J Gallo, California's most influential wine-maker, and is available in leading outlets nationwide.

Sweet music, good food usher in holidays

BRGY. Capt. Nene Lichauco

THE RECENT "SALCEDO NIGHTS LIVE," a series of evening concerts at the Jaime Velasquez Park in Salcedo Village, featured not only superb musical performances but also Via Mare specialties.

Well-known restaurateur Glenda Barretto served under white tents her restaurant chain's best-known items during the series that ushered in the holiday season.

Barangay Bel-Air organized the series that opened in November with the Philippine Youth Symphonic Band (PYSB). It was the second concert since the opening of the Salcedo Weekend Community Market last year.

The PYSB has more than 60 members aged 7 to 22. Its repertoire included Peter Tchaikovsky's "Marche Slave," familiar Christmas carols and "The Saints Hallelujah" by Luther Henderson.

The audience included writer Carmen Guerrero Nakpil, Makati Commercial Estate Association (Macea) member Ismael "Toto" Cruz, and businessman Greggy Araneta.

Also featured during the series was the Mandaluyong Children's Choir, one of the finest children's choral ensembles in the Philippines.

Barangay Bel-Air Captain Nene Lichauco said the residential community decided to make the concerts a regular holiday event because of the warm reception it received from residents and guests during its first staging last year. The series launch featured the "Acoustic Perfection" and "Silk and Steel."

It was meant to complement the Salcedo Saturday Market by providing an opportunity for barangay residents to relax and unwind in the evening by listening to good live music.

The PYSB concert was sponsored by the Directories Philippines Inc., in cooperation with the Women of Bel-Air. It was directed by Alex Cortes. Other organizers were Monique Siguion-Reyna Villongco and Irene Marcos-Araneta.

SUSAN Medina, Tony Maige, Irene Marcos-Araneta and Mai Maige

Paradise found

THE ONLY LIQUEUR IN THE world made from world-renowned Philippine mangoes and premium aged rum, Paradise Mango Rum Liqueur is a multi-awarded product.

It won in the recently concluded International Spirits Challenge in London. It also took first place as the trendiest product in Citem's Asian Ethnic Foodfest in Manila in 2002. And in 2004, in Japan, it won the Asean G-Mark award for best design in the food and beverage category. It was the only winner in the food and beverage category.

Bottled in a frosty matted glass and encased in a graphic laden can, Paradise Mango Rum is not only tasty. It can also be served in a variety of ways—as an aperitif, an after-meal concoction, offered in cocktails, as a cooking ingredient, a baking element, a souvenir or a gift.

It can be enjoyed in many disguises. Serve it on the rocks or with crushed ice to bring magic and life to your parties specially this holiday season. But in whatever form it appears, whether as a straight drink (on the rocks), a chilled cocktail drink or a luscious cake topping, it will always cast a magic spell on anyone who tastes it.

MANGO
UM LIQUEUR

Paradise Mango Rum is a world-class product that is currently being exported to Switzerland and expanding its overseas market. It is an original product of Destileria Limtuaco & Co. Inc., the oldest distillery in the Philippines.

Shrinking 'pan de sal' signals troubled times ahead

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

CONSUMERS DO NOT NEED A CRYSTAL ball to find out what the market will be like next year. They only have to take a good look at today's *pan de sal* and see how it has deteriorated in quality and size. If it is any indication, it will be a dismal year for consumers.

Our daily bread has not only shrunk to the smallest size ever, but it now costs twice last year's price. Here in our neighborhood in San Juan, for example, *pan de sal* now costs P1 each as compared to last year's 50 centavos.

For the price, we expect better quality, but the bread we get these days is either gummy or full of air unlike the good old *pan de sal* that didn't stick to the gums and was full of substance. As for the size, our *pan de sal* is just slightly bigger than the egg of a goose, and we are not joking.

The local baker explained that the cost of ingredients had been increasing. Flour, he said, was now over P600 per sack compared to last year's P500. And, when we got him talking about his cost of production, he rattled off the hiked prices of yeast, sugar, liquefied petroleum gas, electricity, transportation, labor, packaging, value-added tax add-ons, etc.

"The price of our *pan de sal* is bound to increase some more, what with the new expanded value-added tax," he predicted. We dread to think of how much *pan de sal* will cost next year but I am sure of one thing. The size cannot shrink any further. Who would want *pan de sal* the size of golf balls?

Just asking

Who was the government official who announced members of indigenous communities—like Aetas, Igorots, Badjaos—would no longer be panhandling on the streets of Metro Manila this holiday season? The official said they returned to their homes around Mt. Pinatubo, the Cordilleras, and Mindanao.

For the information of the official, the mendicants are back begging on the streets (did they ever go home?). They're going from house to house, too.

And who was the official who announced that taxi drivers could no longer refuse passengers? Cab drivers are blatantly ignoring the land transportation official, especially this holiday season.

Our copy editor, for one, jotted down the numbers of two cabs whose drivers arrogantly rejected her. We are forwarding to the Land Transportation Office the names and numbers of these taxis.

We are also forwarding to LTO a complaint from a reader who related to us the following unique story:

"I boarded a cab from SM Megamall, but halfway to my destination, the driver stopped the engine. He said I had to get off because the box of lunch I was carrying was emitting a strong fishy smell. It was a *daing na bangus* boxed lunch I bought at Red Ribbon.

"The driver apologized and said he couldn't concentrate on his driving because of the smell. I hope the LTO finds something in its book of traffic offenses to penalize the driver."

Praises

A cashier at Leonardo's Foodarama keeps tabs of product expiry date. We thank her for checking the label of the milk product we bought and informing us that the expiry date was the following day.

Leonardo's is a mini grocery known to long-time San Juan residents who have patronized it long before the big malls came.

We thank Priscilla T. Cruz, instructor at the English department of Ateneo de Manila University, for her heartwarming e-mail. She wrote: "Thank you for . . . your consumer column. I've forwarded your e-mail to some of my co-teachers who need a shoulder to cry on [for problems with] PLDT or poor-quality products that stores refuse to replace . . . I'm definitely going to help you in your crusade to help the Pinoy consumer."

By the way, we are warning shoppers to be wary of bargain sales, particularly canned and processed foods. They may have passed their expiration dates. Check the label, as well as the condition of the packaging. Don't buy expired goods, also cans with dents or rust.

We wish our readers a Happy New Year!

Send feedback to mvgiron07@yahoo.com.

HOTEL INTERCONTINENTAL Manila's Prince Albert Rotisserie presents New Year's Eve dinner (choice menu) at P1,950+ per person. An equally sumptuous dinner buffet awaits guests at Café Jeepney for only P1,206+ per person. Dishes include Whole Salmon Baked in a Rock Salted Crust, Glazed Ham with Pineapple Sauce, Seafood Paella, Chestnut Mousse Cake and Plum Pudding. Breakfast, brunch (breakfast-lunch) and dinner buffets will be served at Café Jeepney on New Year's Day. Call 8159711.

New Year buffets

THE RICHMONDE Hotel offers New Year's dinner buffet at the Grill. The buffet includes Stuffed Turkey with Cranberry Sauce, Roast Prime Rib with Bordelaise Sauce, Grilled Tuna with Avocado Salsa and Chips, Breaded Prawns Covered in Coconut and Paella a la Valencia, with appetizers, soups, desserts, and bottomless iced tea or wine. Children aged 4 and below can dine for free while children aged 5-12 get a 50-percent discount.

The Exchange Bar serves local beers, alcoholic and non-alcoholic fruit punch with its buffet priced at P450 net per person. Call 6387777.

DINING OUT

LEGENDA Hotel at Subic Freeport welcomes the New Year with music, merrymaking and surprise activities for the whole family. On New Year's Eve, Christmas delicacies like *bibingka* and *puto bumbong* will be available. Le Café offers Filipino dishes for Media Noche. Call 7329888.

MAKATI Shangri-La Hotel offers at the newly renovated Shang Palace Shanghainese cuisine prepared by the hotel's new Shanghainese chefs. Dishes include Baked Fresh Prawns with Ginger and Garlic in Dark Sauce, Xiao Loong Pao or steamed mini Shanghai dumplings, Quick Fried Fish Fillet with Five Spices in Shanghai Style and Braised Soft Beancurd with Fresh Crab Roe. Call 8138888 local 7588 or 7599.

SUSHI-YA gives a P100 discount on your bill with every three orders of Bento Box in easy-to-carry takeout containers. Also, get a free Yuki or Mori Meal for a minimum order of any three rice toppings. Any purchase of a main dish comes with a free rice or soup. Visit Sushi-Ya branches at SM Megamall, Robinsons Galleria, Robinsons Place Ermita and SM Pampanga (3-5 p.m.); and Tomas Morato and Libis (5-7 p.m.).

DIAMOND Hotel's Sky Lounge Music Bar will have the New Year's Countdown Party at 6 p.m., with live entertainment by the Puresound and Elements bands.

HERITAGE Hotel's Restaurant Riviera serves buffet for only P1,100 net per person on Jan. 1 that includes Pan-fried Salmon with Sake, Rosemary Brochette of Snapper on Balsamic Sauce, Almond Crusted Rack of Lamb with Green Basil Sauce, Smoked Pork Loin with Leek Compote, and Braised Duck with Blue Ginger among others. On New Year's Eve, join the dinner dance for only P1,200 net. A New Year's Eve party will be held at the poolside from 9 p.m. For P600 net per person, get two rounds of drinks and party favors while listening to a live band.

BURGOO offers its bestsellers like Oklahoma-Style Grilled Baby Back Ribs, Seafood Caesar Salad, Lemon-Peppered Grilled Lapu-Lapu, Grilled Pork Chops, Country-Style Fried Chicken, Supreme Pizza, and Seafood Linguini this holiday season. Call 9277424,6875254, 7264663 or 9136112.

NOTICE AND WARNING

The public is hereby warned of the proliferation of fake and counterfeit "SAPPORO LONG KOW" vermicelli products in the market.

SAPPORO PRODUCTS, INC. is the sole, official and authorized manufacturer, distributor, copyright owner and trademark holder of "SAPPORO LONG KOW" vermicelli products in the Philippines. Therefore, any "SAPPORO LONG KOW" vermicelli products sold or distributed by any person/entity other than the above-named corporation or its duly authorized dealers are originated from illegal source.

Under the Intellectual Property Rights Law (R.A. 8293), selling fake products is a criminal offense. Likewise, resort to "Parallel Importation" of "SAPPORO LONG KOW" vermicelli products, even genuine ones is unlawful as it constitutes Unfair Trade Competition punishable under the same law. As such, all persons or entities engaged in such activities are hereby demanded to CEASE and DESIST its operation. Otherwise, they shall be prosecuted to the full extent of the law under the provision of the said law including liability for damages.

REWARD FOR INFORMATION*

A reward of PhP20,000.00 shall be awarded to anybody who could provide substantial and relevant information that will lead to the successful prosecution of the seller/importer of fake, counterfeit and plagiarized "SAPPORO LONG KOW" vermicelli products.

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The princes of Indian cooking

Part 2

INDIAN FOOD VARIES ACCORDING to region. We eat for health and in keeping with religious beliefs, according to Max Taljera and chef Murlidhar Khulbay of Prince of Jaipur.

Vegetarian Hindus eat only vegetables, no meat at all and no eggs. Non-vegetarian Hindus eat mutton, chicken and seafood, but not beef. Muslims do not eat pork.

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

At Prince of Jaipur, we have Halal meat for Muslims. Those of the Janism religion, who are strict vegetarians, will not allow even garlic and onion, therefore, everything is cooked separately for them.

The most popular Indian dishes are from the north, cooked in Tandoor oven with charcoals—Chicken Tikka, Tandoori Chicken, Chicken and Mutton/Lamb Biryani (brown rice, like paella), Butter Chicken (Murgh Makhani).

Typical meal

If one wants an authentic meal, one must try Thali—a plate filled with *katori*, little bowls filled with curries of meat, seafood, vegetable with dhal, rice and bread—a complete meal served in all Indian homes, from palaces to humble abodes.

At Prince of Jaipur, we have three kinds of Thali: vegetarian, seafood and meat. This is the best way to experience Indian food and the price is reasonable, ranging from P399 to P599. When we open our branches in Eastwood and Asia Mall, it will even be cheaper!

When ordering in an Indian restaurant, important words to remember are:

Tandoori—cooked in a tandoor oven made of brick and clay
Tikka—chunks of meat
Garam—spicy
Masala—herb/spice mixture
Dhal—lentil
Murgh—chicken
Roti, Naan—types of Indian bread
Kofta—meatballs
Aloo—potato
Paneer—fresh, unaged, pressed cottage cheese
Palak—spinach

So why not try something different? Spice things up and get the New Year off to a good start!

Max and chef Khulbay share their recipes:

Dhal Makhani—"Famous Punjab Dhal" Black Lentil Stew

- ½ kilo black dhal washed and soaked in 1 ½ liters of water overnight. Add salt to taste, 2 pcs black cardamom, 1 cinnamon stick and 1 bay leaf. Add ½ tsp red chili powder and 2 tbsp vegetable oil. Boil for 30 minutes.
- When cooked, heat 2 tbsp oil in frying pan then put 20 g garlic and ginger paste until golden brown.
- Put boiled dhal, then stir and put 10 g butter, 10 g cream, tomato sauce and tomato paste. Stir for 15 minutes.
- Serve with little cream and ginger and butter on top.

Chicken Curry

1 k chicken, cut into cubes
250 g onion
500 g oil
1 tsp garam masala
1 tsp *dhania* powder
1 tsp *jeera* powder
1 tsp chili powder
Salt to taste
1 c tomato sauce
5 g garnish
2 tbsp calamansi juice
150 g coconut milk
100 g ginger and garlic paste

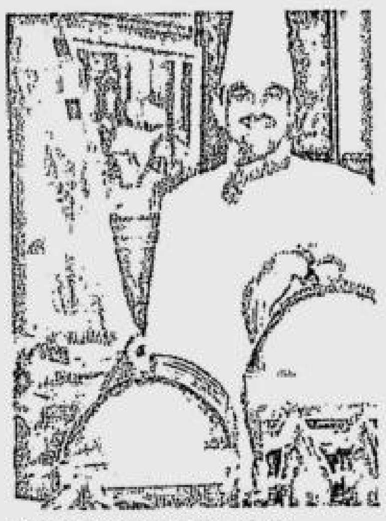
Heat 1 c oil. Add ginger and garlic paste. Cook until golden brown. Add chopped onion, cook until golden brown.

Put all masalas: garam, *dhania*, *jeera*, chili and salt to taste. Add tomato, stir until the oil comes up to the surface.

Put chicken. Cook for 15 minutes.

Add ½ liter water, cover and leave for 15-20 minutes on medium fire. When chicken is tender, add 50 ml Nestlé cream.

Serve with chopped green coriander leaves and ginger julienne on top.



CHEF Murlidhar Khulbay

MAX Taljera

Chef Khulbay's Lamb Biryani

250 g basmati rice, rinsed and soaked in cold water for 30 mins
½ tsp salt
2 garlic cloves, peeled and left whole
1-inch piece ginger root, garlic 4 cloves
½ tsp black peppercorns
2 green cardamom pods
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp coriander seeds
1-inch pc cinnamon stick
1 tsp saffron strands
4 tbsp tepid water
2 tbsp ghee
2 shallots, sliced
¼ tsp grated nutmeg
¼ tsp chili powder
500 g boneless lamb, cut into 2.5-cm/1-inch cubes
¾ c natural yogurt
2 tbsp sultanas (golden raisins)
¼ c flaked (slivered) almonds, toasted

Bring salted water to boil. Add rice, boil for 6 minutes. Drain, set aside.

Grind together garlic, ginger, cloves, peppercorns, cardamom pods, cumin, coriander, cinnamon. Combine saffron and water, set aside. Heat ghee, add shallots. Fry until golden brown. Add ground spice mix, nutmeg and chili powder. Stir for 1 minute, add lamb. Cook until evenly browned.

Add yogurt, stirring constantly, add sultanas, bring to simmer. Cook for 40 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Carefully pile the rice on the sauce. Trickle saffron solution over rice. Cover pan with a clean tea towel and put lid. Reduce heat to low and cook for 10 minutes. Remove lid and towel. Quickly make three holes in the rice with a wooden spoon handle up to the level of the sauce, but not touching it. Put back tea towel and lid and leave to stand for 5 minutes.

Remove lid, lightly fork the rice. Serve, sprinkled with toasted almonds.

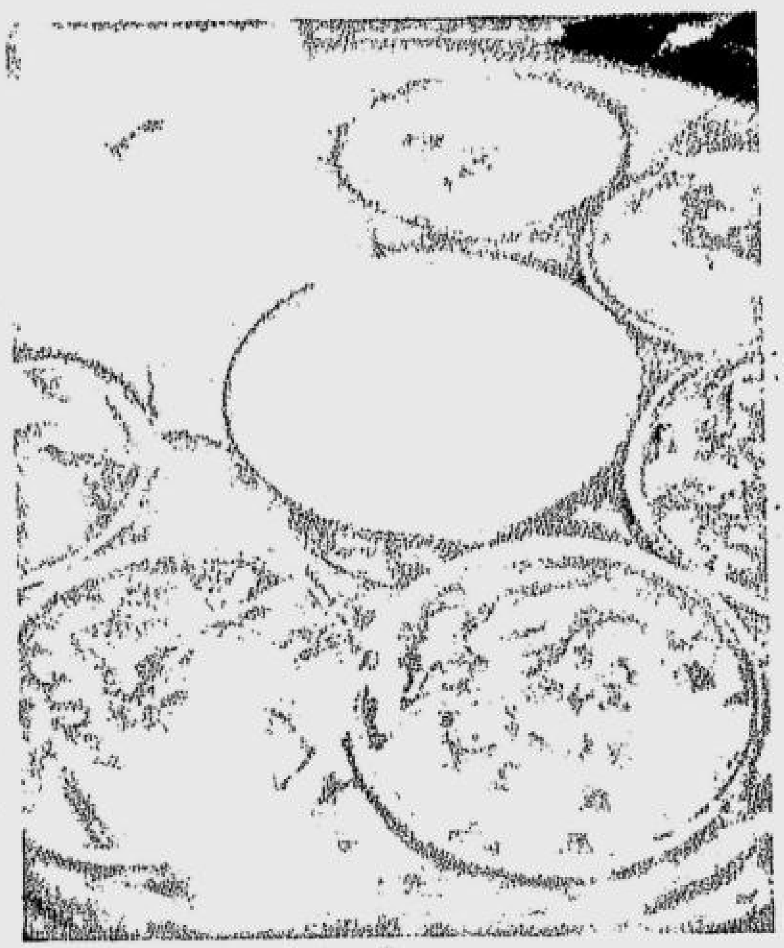
For ingredients, call Assad (5261349).

To Max and chef Khulbay, for sharing the very best of India through fine cuisine in an environment that befits royalty and for the comforting thought that you deliver your food anywhere in the Philippines (it's true!), *maraming salamat*!

Naya Saal Mubarak, Happy New Year!

Prince of Jaipur is at Unit E, The Fort (8841692/94).

E-mail the author at raspiras@inquirer.com.ph



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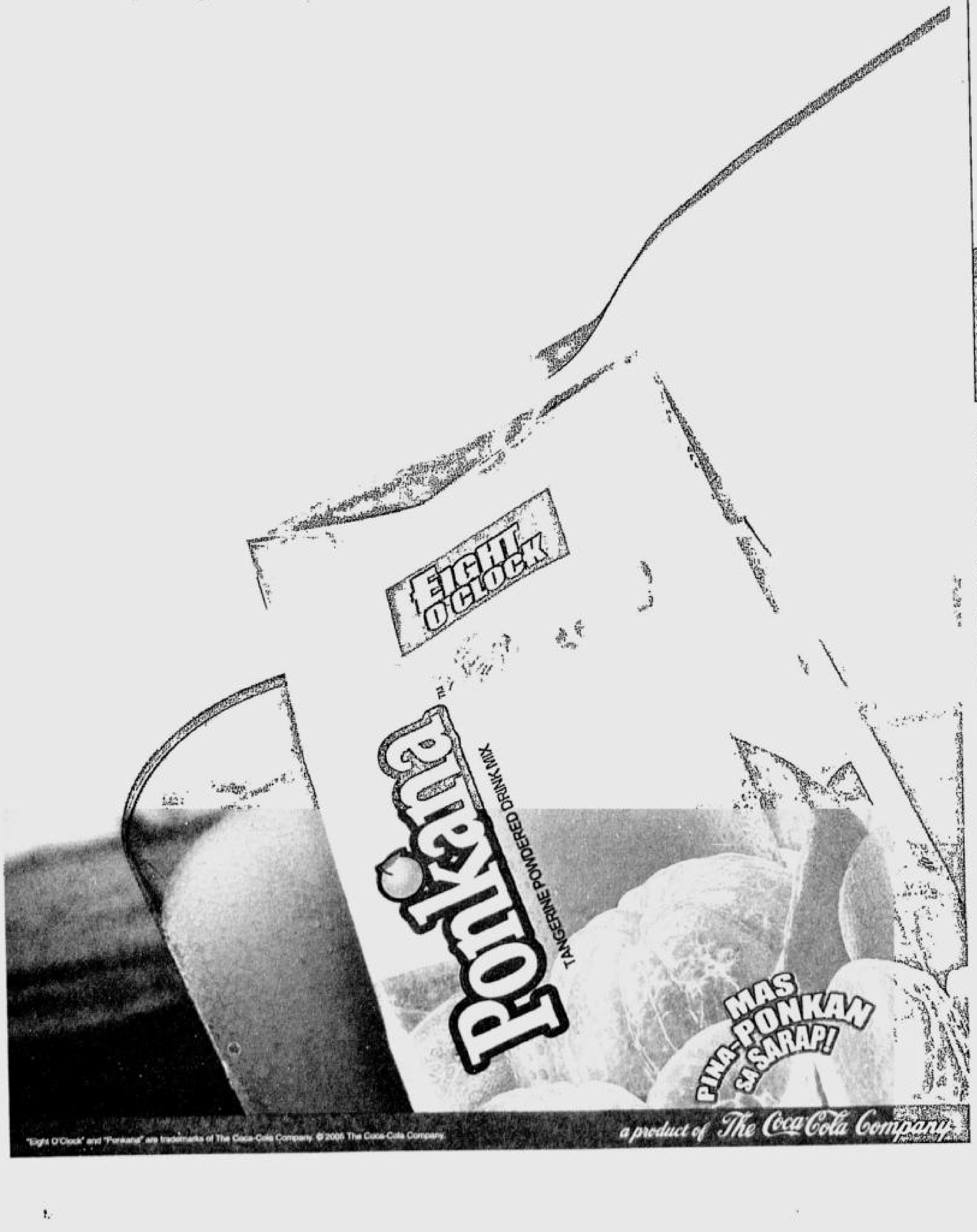
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